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The British Baptists and politics, 1603-1649

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The British Baptists and Politics, 1603-49

Ph D

2002

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The British Baptists and Politics, 1603-44

The thesis is concerned to challenge the long-standing orthodoxy in which the Baptists appear as two separate and separately originating denominations called 'Particular' and 'General' defined on the basis of attitude to predestination and the atonement. It shows, first, that there were from the foundations of the 'Generals' in 1609 two tendencies, one continental, a clericalist and pacifist grouping influenced by the Dutch Mennonites (Smyth), and the other chiefly reflecting the English tradition of erastianism and local lay predominance in religion (Helwys), whose traditions were broadly continued under the leadership of Murton and after. The baptized congregations which emerged from London Independency in the 30s were less hostile to high Calvinism. Immersion was adopted in 1641 by people of different congregations, including those which were later known as "General" but were not differentiated according to theology at the time. The supposedly "General" Thomas Lamb's congregation contained prominent high Calvinists till 1644. There is no evidence for any denominational structure in the years 1640-44. There was no such thing as the 'Particular Baptist' denomination until the seven London churches issued a confession in October 1644, and no controversy on theology between Baptists before that date; arguments centred on the question of who could initiate baptism anew. The familiar denominational structure crystallised 1644-7 in response to politics and only secondarily reacted back upon politics. The numbers of Baptist army officers in 1647 has been over-estimated. Many of the strong contingent of Army Particular Baptists in Ireland were converted there and this is likely also to apply to Scotland. The Particular Baptists were influential in the direction of social and political conservatism in England in 1647-9, but some of their members and even leaders, were influenced by the Levellers. The chief organized religious support for the Levellers was in the group of General Baptists around Lamb, all of whose leaders were active Levellers. After 1649, this tendency became less influential. Large numbers of Baptists rejected formal ordinances from 1648-52, some army figures earlier, and they were influenced often by millenarian and ecstatic tendencies: in a related and parallel movement, General Baptists fell off towards a proto-Quaker 'seeking' and even (more rarely) 'ranting', which both also rejected formal ordinances. It was in the face of such difficulties that denominational lines tended to harden.

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Puritans, Separatists and Baptists

1 Early career of John Smyth

It will be suggested that the secession from the Church of England of John Smyth, Thomas Helwys, and their friends who later became Baptists, did not arise from new principles embraced “spontaneously”. For several years, Smyth, the most important early leader, continued to hope for recognition as a preacher within the official church, but engaged with other radical puritans to resist the general thrust of ecclesiastical politics set in London.

Smyth was certainly in conflict with entrenched interests long before his separation. On 27 September 1600 he was elected town lecturer of Lincoln. Here he made powerful enemies, including Alderman Leon Hollingworth. Before 13 December 1602 Smyth was unseated for ‘enormous doctrine and undue teaching of matters of religion’ and preaching against ‘men of this city’.¹ Uprooted from his tenure, Smyth sought redress at the common law. The tangled legalities were considered by the Assize judges, who passed the problem to Sir William Wray, and others. These failed to agree, so ‘the whole was left to the umperage of the Lord Sheffield.’² Meanwhile, Bishop Chaderton of Lincoln had, on 9 December 1602, charged Smyth with unlicensed preaching, a charge upheld on 1 April. Smyth appealed, having held a licence from Whitgift himself, but the Archbishop revoked this in September 1603, on the grounds that it had been granted upon wrong information’.³ This may have had to do with larger issues. On May 1603 Whitgift wrote to Chaderton that he ‘did not think his majesty will suffer any disordered persons in the church’, and during the summer diocesan officials were in receipt of several letters from the bishop, often with enclosures from Whitgift. Names of preachers were sent to Chaderton on 20 Sept. Three days earlier Smyth’s opponents complained that Sheffield had ordered ‘that we should no further prosecute law against Mr Smyth’; if the Bishop should find against him ‘we are to release to him all costs and charges of suit we have sustained through his doctrine and misdemeanours’. Chadderton’s sentence was almost certainly unfavourable:- Smyth remained unlicensed, but was happy with the financial settlement, thanking Sheffield for having ‘wisely and charitably compounded the controversy on both parts to the contentment of either of us’⁴

¹ HMC 14th Report vol 8 part 2, 76,78,79; Smyth’s Lincoln career: *Smyth1* xlv-xlvi; *Smyth1*, 44-5; Burgess, *JSSB*, 45-54; Hill, *Tudor and Stuart Lincoln*, 110-13.

² John Beck (Mayor), Hollingworth and others to Bishop, 17 Sept 1603, L.A.O., Cor B 2, 4.

³ L.A.O., Cj14, ff 30v-41v; *CSPD 1603-10*, 24

⁴ *SOC*, li-lii, 245-9; L.A.O., Cor B/2, 4; *Smyth1(PTP)*, 69.

Smyth and the group of clerical puritans in the area had other protectors, especially Sir William Bowes and his wife Isabel. Sir William, from Barnard Castle, Durham, had for long been engaged in border duties and was from 1603 commander of the garrison, and then governor, of Berwick, where he was residing in both July and December 1606.⁵ The zealous Isabel Bowes was probably the chief source of support; she 'gave about a thousand pounds per annum to maintain preachers when there were none'. Her home at Walton near Chesterfield probably served as a venue for several local consultations, even as late as 1607 when some of those attending had left the Church. Smyth dedicated his first book *The Bright Morning Starre* to Isabel's brother, 'the right worshipful religious and courteous knight, Sir William Wray, my approved friend and benefactor'. Thomas Helwys dedicated his book *A Short and Plain Proofoe* to her in 1611.⁶

At Gainsborough on 11 March 1604, John Smyth, a 'preacher', baptised a daughter and in August the visitors of the town heard that he continued to preach there.⁷ On 18 April 1604, there appeared at Newark quarter sessions a 'John Smyth clerk, Sowth Clifton', twelve miles south of Gainsborough. In August 1603, the visitors of the Archdeaconry of Nottingham had been informed that the curate in North Clifton was John Smyth, a 'master of the Arts and a painful preacher of God's word' (unusual in a village curacy). Surely these three Smyths - of Gainsborough, and of Clifton, North and South - were the same person. At East Retford on 5 October 1604 John Smith, clerk, of Clifton, and twelve others, were charged with 'riot and rout'. Five of the accused were clergymen: Smyth, John Herring, Godfrey Pye, Henry Bannister and Richard Jackson. It seems implausible that this was simply an outbreak of clerical hooliganism. Probably it originated in a dispute over the rights of presentation to the parish of Marnham. Herring had been inducted to the vicarage 'vacant by the resignation of John Hall, the deprivation of Henry Aldred' on 28 Jan 1604.⁸

On 18 April, Aldred and four others were charged at Newark with riot, assault and imprisonment; sureties were given on his behalf that he would 'keep the peace especially with John Herring'. Pye and John Smyth clerk, of South Clifton, stood sureties of ten pounds each for Herring, who was also bound over to keep the peace. On 11 July at Newark, Aldred was again bound over, on Herring's petition. All this preceded the 'riot and rout' noted by the court in October. Both Herring (12 April 1605) and Aldred (10 July 1605) paid fines under protest, but

⁵ Egerton Papers, Camden Soc (1840) 229-239; HMC Cecil XV, 335,393; XVIII, 215-6,358.

⁶ Isabel Bowes, daughter of Sir Christopher Wray, a former Chief Justice [J.Hunter *South Yorkshire* 58,59,163; Cockayne *Complete Peerage* iv, 77; J.T.Cliffe *The Yorkshire Gentry*, 99-100]; Smyth I, 2.

⁷ C.Foster, ed *Gainsborough Parish Registers*, 47; L.A.O., Vi/18 f167; printed in *Lincs RS* 44, 125.

⁸ *Thoroton Soc*, 46, 3,10; Copnall, *Records of Nottinghamshire*, 163-165, NottArch, C/QSM 1 66 1,34; NottArch, Hodgkinson Typescript, vol 2, 256

Herring lost the living. On 1 March 1605, he was instituted to Basford, where Smyth preached unlicensed in early 1607, a connection which tends to confirm that the Smyth of South Clifton was the future Baptist.⁹ The later careers of Smyth and Herring, cited for unlicensed preaching at Church Greasley, and the presence of another clerk, Richard Jackson, possibly the future separatist, suggests that the case was not just about property.¹⁰

In March 1605 Smyth provided more evidence of his difficulties in finding acceptance as a clergyman of the established Church. He issued *A Patterne of True Prayer*, with a view to 'the clearing of myself from unjust accusations, and the satisfying of a few friends'; the work was dedicated to Lord Edmund Sheffield, President of the Council in the North, in the hope that Sheffield would 'receive it into your Honourable protection'. He had been 'strangely traduced' for his views on the Lord's Prayer, views argued 'before the magistrate ecclesiastical'. This may refer back to the 1603 hearings, but some passages suggest more recent troubles. He lamented that 'persecution is a great discouragement to a minister, and it driveth many a godly man to his dumps, and interrupteth his ministry, or at the least his cheerfulness in his ministry...', a passage resonant with sadness at his lot, but which may also hint - 'interrupteth' - that he had been granted, but feared to lose, a preaching licence. A letter to the Lincoln authorities, sent on his behalf on 3 March 1606 protested that 'Mr Smyth is very loth to give you offence in regard to your former favour in sparing to suspend him'. It seems therefore that after preaching unlicensed at Gainsborough, Smyth had been granted one, but before March 1606, almost had it suspended. This might well have been about the time of *A Patterne*.

Anyway, he was clearly seeking to secure his future within the established church for he repudiated separatism: though worried that formal prayers might encourage coldness of spirit, he was 'far from the opinion of them which separate from our Church, concerning the set form of prayer' and rejected their idea that it was 'unlawful to use the Lord's Prayer as a set prayer'. Smyth's sympathy with the puritan cause within the church found expression here. He prayed that the 'godly ministers may be preserved and kept from the persecution of tyrants and wicked men, whom the devil enrages against them especially, as we see by evident experience, that no sort of men is so much maligned and exposed to the despiht of malicious men, as the faithfull ministers...'. Given that this was published during the period of many suspensions and deprivations for

⁹ NottArch C/QSM 1/66/1 pp 15,13,23,26,34; Train, ed Thoroton Soc.R.S. 15, 15; NottArch, Hodgkinson Typescript II, 286; Aldred was at Marnham again 1607/8 [Marchant PCC 326,302].

¹ Marchant PCC 306; Jackson, given [NottArch QSM 66 1, 34] as clerk of Norwell was perhaps Richard Jackson of Scrooby, for whom Marchant PCC, 141-2, 161, 163, Burgess JR, 79

nonconformity, it is remarkable that this passage escaped Bancroft's watchers. For who, in the view of the faithful ministers, outdid the new Archbishop in spite and malignity against them? ¹¹

There are hints that John Smyth may have been involved in efforts to resist Bancroft. From 1604 to 1609, there were published from the secret press of William Jones, of Red Cross St, London, fifteen unlicensed works, including Henry Jacob's *A Christian Modest Offer*, and William Bradshaw's *English Puritanism*.¹² John Quick was told by Samuel Hieron of Feniton, that his grandfather and namesake of Modbury Devon, had written two of these, including *A defence of the Ministers reasons for refusal* (1606). On the copy of part of this work, 'A Dispute upon the question of kneeling' at University College Oxford, is written "Jhones the printer; Smyth the maker"; Curtis thought the book's references to Devon suggested it was written by a minister of that county.¹³ But there may be a connection between Smyth and Hieron. Samuel Hieron of Modbury was the uncle of Walter Hieron, curate of Stapenhill (Derbys) between 1605 and 1616. It was at Newhall, in Stapenhill, that William Bradshaw, chief writer and coordinator of the literary campaign, was sheltered by Alexander Redditch; perhaps the militant Devon ministers kept in touch with Bradshaw, whose business with Redditch often took him to London, through Walter Hieron.¹⁴ Hieron 'was well esteemed of Mr Hildersham and his hearers'. Arthur Hildersham was a deprived minister with whom Smyth was associated; puzzlingly friendly references by Smyth to 'Mr B' about Autumn 1607, after Richard Bernard's desertion of the separatist cause, might actually refer to Bradshaw, and 'Mr Hi' could refer either to Hildersham or Hieron.¹⁵

Smyth himself experienced a nine month period of doubt over separation, perhaps triggered by new set-backs in the church courts from spring 1606.¹⁶ On 18 March, 1606 at the Archdeaconry Court, he agreed that on 2 March he had preached 'being suspended by my Lord' at Gainsborough in the place of Jerome Phillips, the absent minister. He had not worn a surplice, but had said 'a prayer for the king's majesty.' On 26 March, Smyth failed to appear, but two letters in his favour were received, explaining that he had taken service reluctantly at the insistence of the signatories, William Hickman, Francis Willoughby, E Willoughby, Gervase Helwys, Thomas Darrell and Robert Somerscales, all substantial citizens. The first, dated 3 March, noted that Mr

¹¹ LAO Cor/B/2, 19, 20; *Smyth 1 PTP*, 68-71, 81, 163; *ibid* 83-4, 90, 178-82.

¹² M. Curtis, 'William Jones...' *The Library*, series 5 vol 19, 38-66, 39-42, 48.

¹³ Quick, MSS Icones Sacrae Anglicanae D.W.L., RNC 38 34, 55-90 at 85.

¹⁴ S. Clarke, *A General Martyrology...* (1677), 43-6

¹⁵ Notes on Lichfield diocesan records kindly provided by Dr Richard Clark of Tonbridge School. R. Porter, *The Life of Mr John Hieron...*, (1691), 1; 'Letter to A.S.', *Smyth2*, 547, 556.

¹⁶ *Smyth1* lvi-lvii; *Smyth2*, 337, 534; White *EST* 120-1; *Lincs RS* 44, 125, transcriptions of LAO Vi/18, f167 and LAO Cj/16 ff 32, 97; LAO Cor/B 2 19, 20.

Smyth is very loth to give you offence in regard to your former favour in sparing to suspend him'. The second, dated 24 March, reported that in his sermon he had not uttered 'one word tending to the disturbance of the perfect estate of the church'. It explained that his failure to attend arose from the illness of his wife, pleading on behalf of this 'humble petitioner' that 'his absence in this case be not reputed contumacy'. Sentence was deferred till the feast of John the Baptist, 24 June 1606, but there is no trace of further action then.¹⁷ Clearly Smyth's friends were anxious to paint him in moderate hues. But his behaviour seems to show more compliance than that of other puritans.

In November/January 1606-7, he was in trouble again, for practising as an unlicensed physician: for the court, he was not a separatist but an errant member of the English Church. The reasons for his failure to obtain a license are not known. Perhaps in a period in which great pressure was being placed to make reformers conform, the history of friction between himself and the authorities simultaneously stimulated their distrust and his defiance.¹⁸ Smyth was absent in November, but attended when the case reopened on 13th January, admitting the offence but pleading in extenuation that he had taken no money for his services. Perhaps his original absence was caused by illness rather than defiance. About this time, recalled a former friend, Richard Bernard, God had chastised Smyth with 'sickness nigh unto death, to consider better with himself yet of his course'; it was with Thomas Helwys at Broxtowe, Notts, near Basford, scene of his preaching in February 1607, that Smyth stayed during this illness. Smyth was fined 2/6d, and suspended. All this suggests that he had thus far held onto his regained Lincoln preaching licence, but, despite his academic qualifications, had not been able to secure a ministerial post in the diocese. It seems hard to reconcile all this with leadership of a newly separated Church militant.¹

2. The Separation of 1607

On 25 Feb 1607, John Herring was admonished for having allowed Smyth to preach in Basford Church. The church wardens testified that the sermon was given 'Monday last', 19 February. If Smyth was still a member of the English church, he must have known that the action, coming so soon after his fine and suspension, would invite serious retribution. It marks a clear break with his earlier compliance with the court, amounting to public defiance – probably triggered either by his suspension a month before the Basford sermon, or the narrow escape from the pursuivant which

¹⁷ Philips listed as vicar 1607, *LRS* 23, 430; *LAO* Cor/B/2 19,20; Foster, ed *Gainsborough Parish Registers* 1, 49,127,187; Stark, *History and Antiquities of Gainsborough*, 458.

¹⁸ *LAO* Cj 16 f32, (no fine recorded); no mention *ibid* ff47-58 (18 June, 3 July); *LAO* Cj/16 f97

¹⁹ *Smyth* 2 534,759; R.Bernard, *Christian Advertisements*, 37; *LAO*, Cj 16, f97

may have resulted.²⁰ Richard Clifton soon followed, having been converted by Smyth.²¹ Cited before the Chancery Court at York, 6 March 1607 as the 'pretended curate of Bawtry', he did not attend, and was excommunicated on 20 March. Though reprieved temporarily, after 24 April he 'lapsed into his former excommunication': Clifton had now clearly declared for the separatists.²²

Smyth may perhaps have delayed formal secession in the hope, now disappointed, of carrying the influential Bernard with him. Now he renounced his ordination by 'Wickham prelate of Lincoln', and with the Gainsborough group entered into a Church covenant. This was represented by Bernard as 'a company gathered (as they say) into the name of Christ by a covenant made, to walk in all the ways of Christ known unto them'. Bradford recalled that 'they shook off this yoke of antichristian bondage and as the Lords free people joined themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in the fellowship of the gospel, to walk in all His ways made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, the Lord assisting them.'²³

Several publications suggest a spring separation: the first was in April 1607, when Francis Mason told readers that the 'Brownists ... have gathered a practical conclusion and made an actual separation and rent from the Church of England'.²⁴ In May, a minister, Edward James, wrote to his "beloved brethren", more in sorrow than in anger: "Seeing, my friends, these things be thus: and that you have severed yourselves from our assemblies...".²⁵ Both tone and tense suggest that this split was recent, and may have prompted the book. The writer had himself been attracted to separatism, to 'those men's company, with whose company alone you seem to be delighted', but God convinced him of his error 'in good time'. These passages, and the phrases 'for I remember once, one of you told me some such thing' make it clear that James knew the group intimately; Smyth does refer to James.²⁶ In February 1608, William Crashawe warned that 'the bitter effects like to follow, upon this your separation .. will all lie heavy upon you'.²⁷ It is not certain to whom these passages refer, but Mason knew John Robinson, the former curate of St Andrews, Norwich. Crashaw was from nearby Sheffield, though by now preaching at the Inner Temple.²⁸ But in late

²⁰ NottUniv A15; Marchant, *PCC*, 156,159,301]; *Smyth2*, 522-5, 534;

²¹ R.Clifton, *PFI*, 225-6.

²² Marchant, *PCC*, 155; Burgess *JR*, 83

²³ *Smyth2*, 332, 493,548-50; Bernard, *CA*, 89; Bradford, *OPP*, 9.

²⁴ F.Mason *The Authority of the Church..* Title page, A3v-r, 68, 71.

²⁵ E.James, *A Retreat sounded to certain brethren*, registered May 22 1607, [Arber, Transcripts 3, 349]

²⁶ E James *RSCB*, B2r,Bv,B2v,B3r, *Smyth2* [*PCO* 1609] 532

²⁷ Crashawe *A Sermon Preached at the Cross ... February 14 1607*, 26-34 at 33, registered 19 April 1608, Arber III, 375, M.MacLure *Register of Sermons Preached at Paul's Cross*, 89.

²⁸ P.Wallis *William Crashawe: the Sheffield Puritan* [1963], Burgess *JR*, 62-6; T.Barton, ed , *The Registrum Vagum of Anthony Harrison*, 34-6,157-9

1607, Henoah Clapham's *Flyer* was aware of 'Teachers and people in the farthest part of Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, &c, who are flatly already separated'.²⁹

Most of the separatists maintained a precarious existence in England for a few months. On 14 February 1608, Crashaw asked whether they would soon 'go to the Church of the Low Countries'; if they had left, Crashaw's connections in Sheffield had not yet told him. About mid-1607, Smyth pledged to 'prove [his case] before any witnesses, upon the hazard of my life if I may have audience' which seems to suggest he was still in England, but in great danger. Smyth's *Principles and Inferences* was issued by Richard Schilders at Middleburg, Zeeland, before the end of 1607; it seems a fair working assumption that Smyth handed over the manuscript himself.³⁰

Other radicals drew back under the growing pressure. Toby Matthew, Archbishop of York since April 1606, launched his metropolitan visitation in July 1607, and Bishop Chaderton's episcopal visitation reached the Archdeaconry of Lincoln and Stowe at the end of that month.³¹ Already, probably, a former sympathiser, Richard Bernard, had 'revolted back and upon Subscription made to the Prelate of York, have re-entered upon your said vicarage' at Worksop. Smyth accused him of having sought the rectory of Sawenby and parish of Gainsborough, both 'after your subscription'. Now, in an initiative which prefigured that of Henry Jacob, he founded a covenant within the official Church, formed from persons drawn from several parishes; only about thirty were from his own; Ainsworth confirmed Robinson's figure of 'a hundred voluntary professors.' Robinson said Bernard had initiated the covenant 'in policy to keep your people from Mr Smyth'. In about November 1607, Smyth implied that it was recent, 'of late, the whole country ringeth of it' but he had not yet learned any details, and this suggests Bernard had just founded his covenant. The strong group from Worksop amongst the followers of Robinson and Smyth (and perhaps those from nearby Warsop) is surely a selection from Bernard's group. Robinson had been resident in Norwich from 1603 till at least January 1607 and none of the separatist preachers can have been active here on a regular basis. To many, Bernard's covenant would appear radical. It had been designed, said Robinson, to keep Bernard's followers from Smyth - not, on Robinson's own account, from himself. He was still a member of the Church of England, and evidently resident in Norwich, on 25th January 1607, when baptizing his daughter Bridget at St Peter Hungate.³² Probably, Robinson made his own separation with the minimum of fanfare, avoiding a public split

²⁹ White *EST*, 121-2; *Smyth* 2, 337-8, 520.

³⁰ Crashaw, *SPPC*, 32,33 *Smyth* 2, 335, 547,556; J.Dover Wilson, *TBibS* 11 (1909-11), 65,75-7,88; A.M Johnson, *The Library* 5th vol 5 no 4, 219-242; L. Rostenberg, *The Minority Press and the Crown*, 190-3

³¹ Visitation 30 July - 14th August: *LincsRS* 23, lxxvii-lxxx; *LAO* Vi 19

from the parish structure and retaining links with the godly reformers who remained in it. Hall refers to his 'secession', as opposed to a separation.)

Bernard's group disintegrated in a two way process. Smyth recalled scornfully how 'the Prelate of York hath so bewitched you with his flattery, eloquence and angels, that your covenant is profaned and cast in the dust, men of your covenant must shift for themselves..' Bernard's members grew disillusioned; some 'whom I have known by their own confession to have been enlightened with it, yet now oppose against it'.³³ Either Clifton or Robinson might have recruited some of them before leaving for Holland. On 9 October 1607, Hugh and Ann Bromhead, later members with Smyth in Amsterdam, were listed 'recusants one month'. Robert Southworth was excommunicated on 25 September 1607. The later batch of adherents may have included a local gentleman, Thomas Helwys. In 1608, the Basford churchwardens reported his absence from Church since Michaelmas, ie 29 September, 1607 (long after Smyth's separation).³⁴ A few weeks later, worried about Helwys's drift, Bernard wrote to him listing 'sixteen points' in which you do not 'do well'. Helwys forwarded the letter to Smyth, who in turn penned a furious reply, 'on three days meditation', datable to about November 1607, since Bernard 'had [it] in his hand for six or seven months' before publishing *Christian Advertisements*.. (18 June 1608).³⁵

Smyth seems to have spent some time in Holland without most or all of his congregation. Gervase Nevile had been prosecuted as 'one of a sect of Barrowists or Brownists' by the Ecclesiastical Commission at York on 10 Nov 1607, imprisoned in York castle, and perhaps released soon after 22 March 1608, when Drewe, Jessop, and Joan Helwys were still in custody.³⁶ On 6 April 1608, John Arnefield of Epperston, probably the John Arnefield who signed the Short Confession with Smyth, was charged with refusing the sacrament.³⁷ None can have reached Amsterdam before April. Thomas Helwys was presented with others in early 1608. On 5 July 1608, it was recorded that bonds had been given for the appearance of Joan Helwys. Later in July, the couple were ordered to appear again, but by October the court seems to have abandoned the chase.³⁸ Smyth was probably joined by his followers, possibly in two batches, from summer 1608.

³² International Genealogical Index, citing diocesan record.

³³ Bernard's 'peace with the Archdeacon's court' late 1607: Marchant, *PCC*, 154; *Smyth2*, 334, 462, 461, 331-2, 335, 502; Robinson *JS*, 94-5; Ainsworth, *Counterpoysion* 155-6, 67, 72, 143; covenant, *ibid* 96-7, 140.

³⁴ Marchant, *PCC*, 157; NottsCo QSM 1/66/1 183.

³⁵ *Smyth2*, 328, 329, 332, 520; Bernard, *PE*, 35.

³⁶ Marchant *PCC*, 160; W Burgess *JR*, 72-77; Dexters *EHP*, 392.

³⁷ NottsCo QSM 1/67 1, 20; 'Short Confession', *Burrage2*, 187-200 Scheffer FCM 192

³⁸ Marchant *PCC*, 162, 163; *Smyth2*, 536

All this suggests that Separatism gained ground as a result of the crisis amongst the reformist Puritans which followed the Hampton Court conference. This led, certainly in Notts, Suffolk, Norfolk, and Lincs, to a more generalised crisis for radical Puritans. Perhaps because their hopes, and the level of their organisation, had been raised higher, for a minority, quietist retreat seemed impossible.³⁹ The story is not of a new Robert Browne, or Henry Barrow, striking out for separatist principle, but of a radical movement forced to choose between concessions and secession; this in turn helps explain the pattern of its subsequent disintegration.

3. The Separatists in Holland

The relations between the churches led by Smyth, Clyfton and Robinson cannot be dealt with here. But there were certainly differences between the three leaders, which predated their emigration. By the time of his *Justification of Separation* (1610), Robinson was a Separatist. But even then, Bernard describes him as 'one yet nearest the truth unto us, as I heare, and not so schismatical as the rest'.⁴⁰ Joseph Hall had heard in 1608 'that in dislike of these ceremonies obtruded, and an hopelessness of future liberty, you and your fellows had made a secession, rather than a separation from our church; to a place where your might have scope to profess'.⁴¹

In 1614, Robinson thought Separatists might 'lawfully communicate in private prayer, and other the like holy exercises' with 'the godly among them'. He did not wish 'further to conclude and profess separation than from communion in the public worship, and administrations there'. But this position was not new. In 1607 also, 'I and my people with me generally, did separate from the formal state of the parish assemblies in this persuasion, and so practised all the while we abode in England... there having been also sundry passages between Mr Smyth, and me about it; with whom I refused to join, because I would use my liberty in this point'.⁴² Smyth took a very hard line: 'No religious communion to be had but with members of a visible church'.⁴³ By late 1607, his bitterness at Bernard was incompatible with any contact at all: 'cap and knee [you] run after Antichrist's officers and courts feeing him with your money'; Smyth charged him with ambition,

³⁹ Bradford recalled c300 communicants in the Ancient Church c.1608-9, ['Dialogue', 139.] Scheffer and the Dexters confirm this was a larger emigration than that of the 1590s. [Appendices to *History of the Free Churchmen*, and *The England and Holland of the Pilgrims*]

⁴⁰ R. Bernard: *Plaine Evidences* 73.

⁴¹ Hall, *Common Apology*, 112-13, 32, 124; *Smyth1*, lxviii; George *JREST*, 84.

⁴² Ames correspondence, Lawne, *PSB* 47-54; Robinson, *Of Religious Communion*, Preface, [6]; Burgess thought Robinson's earlier espousal of private communion a possible reason for the Gainsborough-Scrooby division [Burgess *JR*, 70-1].

⁴³ *Smyth1 PI*, 252, and see *Smyth2, Parallels* [1607] 500.

greed, apostacy, and the ‘corruption of your heart’, in having betrayed his religious principles.⁴⁴ The disagreement over private communion, therefore, had predated the emigration. But after leaving England, Robinson had found ‘them of other churches, with whom I was most clearly joined, otherwise minded for the most part’ and (evidently in the period of close relations with the Ancient Church), through a desire for peace, he did ‘forget some of my former grounds; and so have passed out, upon occasion, some arguments against this practice.’ Therefore, Robinson testified in 1614 that he had not developed a new position during the debate with Ames, but had reverted to the one he had held in 1607.⁴⁵

Yet it was not Robinson but Clifton who first argued with Smyth on a broad front. He recalled correspondence with Smyth ‘in England in our former conferences concerning excommunication and other differences then between you and me...’. Smyth was the one “to whose charge both I and divers others had once purposed to have committed our soules had he not besides these broached some former opinions, both erroneous and offensive’. It is clear that there had been a serious falling out between Clifton and Smyth over church discipline. Smyth had already condemned all Church of England assemblies, including the covenanted congregation at Worksop, as false. But also distinguished between two sorts of ‘True’ churches: ‘pure, wherein no open sinne is suffered: corrupt, wherein some one or more knowne sinne is tolerated’. To the latter ‘we labour to discover their faults unto them’. If they refuse to reform, “we depart with them lest wee should partake with their sins; this is our judgement, and practise..”⁴⁶

This suggests a recent or imminent breach between Smyth’s group and another true ie separatist church. *Principles and Inferences* was uncompromising: ‘if the church bear with the party offending and bring him not to repent... then the whole church is defiled... No communion can be had with, nor no joyning can be to, a church thus leavened without manifest consenting to sin. Therefore if the church will not reform open known corruptions after due proceeding separation must be made from it till reformation come.’ It is clear that this was no hypothetical separatist church.⁴⁷ The fact of publication should be stressed: this was not a private airing of

⁴⁴ *Smyth2*, 462,334,328-9.

⁴⁵ Ames’s letter ‘February 25 (probably 1611)’ is first evidence of this dispute K.Sprunger *The Learned Dr William Ames*, 39; Collinson in Cole and Moody *The Dissenting Tradition*, 19.

⁴⁶ *Smyth1* [PTP] 252-3; the year of origin of sections of *Parallels, Censures and Observations* is cited when it bears on Smyth’s development: *Smyth2*, [PCO] (1607), 525.

⁴⁷ *Smyth1*, PI 267 cf *Smyth2*, PCO 1607, 525; *Smyth1*, PI 263, 270,250. Smyth certainly knew about George Johnson and White’s charges, mentioning White in *Parallels*. [*Smyth2*, 335].

differences to be resolved. It amounted to a public citation by Smyth of another separatist church.⁴⁸ Clifton's evidence suggests that the organization to which Smyth was referring here was his, though the late and ambiguous separation of Robinson, and his possible relations with Bernard's group might have been a connected source of concern.

The contention in England between Smyth and Clifton was surely connected with the fact that Smyth, in *Principles and Inferences*, already espoused views distinctly at odds with those of the Ancient Church, to which church Clifton soon adhered. Bradford glossed over his desertion of the future pilgrims, and the disagreements which led to it. He wished to stress the role of John Robinson in the European roots of the Plymouth Plantation, though characterizing Clifton as a 'grave and reverend preacher' who had 'done much good'.⁴⁹ Clifton, an experienced ordained minister, had been working in the Scrooby area since his deprivation from Babworth in 1605, and in July 1607 it was he who read the banns for Margaret Grymsditch and Henry Cullandt, at nearby Sutton cum Lound (married in Amsterdam, 5 July).⁵⁰ The concentration of members within Clifton's area of operation around Scrooby surely reflects this record: it seems that Robinson only arrived in the area about spring 1607. Yet when Clifton arrived in Holland in August 1608 he did not take up the pastorate, either singly or jointly with Robinson, and soon adhered to the Ancient Church. This must have been at least partly out of sympathy with the views of its leaders.

4 Smyth's congregation and its Principles

Certainly in this period Smyth identified broadly with the English separatist tradition of Barrow and Greenwood, and of Johnson, earlier his tutor at Cambridge. But the evidence does not support the further assertions that his ideas 'owed almost everything to Johnson and Barrow', or that the Gainsborough-Scrooby congregations were modelled 'as replicas of Johnson's congregation in Amsterdam'. Johnson's references to its ecclesiological structure at about the time of Smyth's arrival in Amsterdam reveal a hierarchy in which each office is rigidly demarcated according to its own 'peculiar function'.⁵¹

⁴⁸ K. Sprunger *Trumpets from the Tower*, 86, 88, 89; A. Johnson *The Library*, 5th ser, vol 5, no 4 (1951), 219-42; this might explain why the book was published not in Amsterdam by Giles Thorpe, a 'pillar and core member of the Ancient Church', but miles away at Middleburg.

⁴⁹ Clifton *PFI*, 4; *Smyth2*, 575; Bradford *OPP* 16-17; Bradford, 'Dialogue', 139; Clifton's family bible, quoted in Arber, *Story of the Pilgrim Fathers*, 96

⁵⁰ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* 2, 203; Clifton cited March 1607 as 'pretended curate of Bawtry' [Marchant *PCC*, 155]; Scheffer *HFC*, 190; Burgess *JR*, 83.

⁵¹ White *EST*, 122-4; Cotton *WCCC*, 7; Bernard *CACP*, 37; F. Johnson *Certaine Reasons*, 27-8; Ainsworth *Counterpoyson*, 176-7, Ainsworth, *Defence*, 96; *Smyth2*, 436-40.

That this is in sharp contrast with Smyth's approach is evident. In an early statement (about November 1607) he argued that 'Christ intendeth the power of binding and loosing to be given to every brother'; to allot such power to the Eldership was Presbyterianism. 'So the church which is Christ's body, hath power from Christ, and the Eldership a part of the body'; 'ordination doth give nothing at all to the minister. For election is the very essence and form of the minister'⁵² 'The care of the whole church jointly must be to keep her power given her by Christ and not to suffer any open known sin, or any tyranny or usurpation over them.' Lay members were to be very active: 'The chief care of every member must be to watch over his brother in bearing each others burden admonishing the unruly, comforting the feeble minded, admonishing the excommunicate, restoring them that are fallen.' There was much interchangeability of function within the eldership, and other gifted men could be 'appointed by the church' as prophets, 'apt to utter matter fit to edification, exhortation, and consolation'.⁵³

But Smyth also asks in *Principles* 'whether the church may suffer her officers to be translated from herself upon any ground', and 'whither an officer may refuse an office imposed on him by a lawful calling?' seem to imply that the church was directing a reluctant officer. This and other passages seem to reflect a dialogue between him and his distant colleagues, and there are hints that Smyth wanted to resist calls from some quarters in England for his own "translation" to the Ancient Church.. There were other queries in *Principles*; probably, the young congregation was agreed on fundamentals but was now thrashing out practical difficulties, and some theoretical issues still unresolved.⁵⁴ This conflicts with any idea that they thought to adopt wholesale the practices of another congregation.

This impression of vigorous internal debate is consistent with what we know about Smyth's congregation. Helwys, a local member of a large gentry family, was admitted to Grays Inn in 1597.⁵⁵ Hugh Bromhead had been curate of North Wheatley and clerk of the neighbouring peculiar of Bole.⁵⁶ Gervase Neville was a gentleman but seems not to have attended university. Thomas Piggot was a later pastor at the Bakehouse. Smyth refers either to a Robert Southwood or Southworth as a member of his congregation. If it was Southwood, he was a schoolmaster; if it was Southworth he had been curate and then vicar (1598) of Headon, where the churchwardens

⁵² *Smyth2 PCO* (1607) 388,390,391,510; in 1609, in the longest 'parallel', he exhaustively defended the powers of the whole church. *ibid* (1609), 416,421,424,429,435-6

⁵³ *Smyth1 PI* 256-7,261,262,266,259,255.

⁵⁴ *Smyth1, Principles*, 264-266; *Smyth2* 541

⁵⁵ *Smyth1*, lvi; Foster, *Gray's Inn Admissions*, 92; For Helwys's family, *TBHS* 3 18-30, BQ7 241-55

⁵⁶ Marchant, *PCC*, 297; Burgess *JR* 71; Burgess *JSSB*, 167-8.

deposed in 1603 that he had graduated MA.⁵⁷ The Lincoln diocesan authorities discovered three other men all later listed as Smyth members. Thomas Seamer, 'teacheth young children in his house... John Hardie for the like ... Alexander Fleming, usher for the like', and the problematic Robert Southwood, schoolmaster'.⁵⁸ A probable member, Thomas Bywater, had attended Christ's College, was ordained, became a private chaplain to Edward Sheffield and then Lord Hunsdon, and had written a 'seditious' book which he presented to the King at Ware;⁵⁹ his widow Ursula later joined the Waterlanders.⁶⁰

Leaving aside Bywater, and Southworth-Southwood, of these nine men, five had attended university and one Grays Inn. Three others inspired sufficient confidence in puritan parents to be entrusted with their children's instruction. Their wives and other relatives must have made up a large proportion of Smyth's congregation, probably about forty strong at the time of his rebaptism. William Hamerton, the cousin of the Bromheads, was also of a gentry family.⁶¹

5 John Smyth and the Ancient Church

For Dutch Calvinists, military and political realities demanded good relations with England; as concerned as English bishops to build a unified national church, they displayed growing hostility to the separatists.⁶² The Dutch Reformed ministers were active in initiating and supporting the non-separating Begnyhof Church (founded 1607) as a rival to the Ancient Church. The chief promoter was the ex-separatist Matthew Slade, rector of the Dutch Reformed Latin School, soon to marry the step-daughter of Plancius. John Paget was selected as pastor - after the Dutch had 'checked thoroughly into his background, lest he harbour any sign of Brownism or other extremism.'⁶³ Paget accepted the supervision of the North Holland synod and the Amsterdam classis; it 'received subsidies and church buildings'; the synod protested when the Ancient Church was granted

⁵⁷ *Smyth2*, 334, *Marchant PCC*, 139,147; K.Train, *North Notts clergy* (Thoroton Soc R.S. 20 [1959-60]), 101, Clifton *PFI*, 149

⁵⁸ LAO, Vi/19 f52, entry printed in *LRS 44*, 126

⁵⁹ For Bywater's extraordinary story: *HMC Cecil 16*, 430; *HMC Cecil 17*, passim esp 108-9; he was involved with Lewis Pickering of Titchmarsh, Northants, an influential puritan in 1603, tried by Star Chamber for a libel upon Whitgift (ibid 114-5, etc).

⁶⁰ *Burrage1*, 245, *Burrage2*, 200.

⁶¹ Smyth claims '40 witnesses' heard his views [*Smyth2*, 757]; Hamerton was a glover, will 4 Feb 1635, proved on 9th April [Harleian Soc 51 (1903)]

⁶² Bradford, 'Dialogue', 131; Paget *An Arrow*, 45 q in *Sprunger DP*, 52; *Sprunger DP*, 53

⁶³ *Sprunger DP*, 63,91-2; Carter *ERC*, 20-21; W.Nijenhuis, ed. *Matthew Slade 1569-1628*, 4-6; *Sprunger Trumpets from the Tower*, 50; Carter *ERC*, 48.

permission to build a meeting-house in 1607.⁶⁴ The Separatists were also dogged by scandal, publicly aired, by George Johnson and Thomas White, relating to one of their elders, Daniel Studley. Most serious, as Lawne spelt out a little later, was his 'partiality in perverting justice': the sins of Daniel Studley are not only personal sins but also the sins of his administration'. This is especially relevant since, by the time of John Smyth's arrival in Amsterdam, power was already 'centred in Johnson and Studley even though the outward forms of democracy were maintained'.

Now surely both Smyth's heavy stress on the role and responsibilities of the whole church membership, and his uncompromising attitude to the toleration of known sin should have immediately led him into conflict with the Ancient Church? Bernard says: 'Mr Smith from the time of his first outbreak from us, kept no full comfort with them, to whom he seemed to conjoin, but was as a jarring string to marre their musicke'.⁶⁵ Henoah Clapham reported that whilst Smyth and Johnson argued from the same texts 'both of them differ exceedingly' in their interpretation of those texts. In the Smyth group, officers' functions were interchangeable and women and children 'give their consent' for the election of officers; Clapham thought Smyth was offering 'a different discipline' from the Ancient Church, and even suggested this was a device to attract members.⁶⁶ And yet there is evidence that for a time, Smyth enjoyed close relations with the Ancient Church leaders. Bradford attested to this and John Dayrell (Darrell), a former separatist, recalled that Smyth 'did highly esteem and reverence the Church of Amsterdam', though he used this ^{as} means to prove his inconsistency.⁶⁷ Clifton recalled that 'To the elders and brethren were you most welcome, and glad they were of you, so long as you walked in the faith with them.'

But this referred not to Smyth's church, but to Smyth the individual. The elders cannot have been 'glad of' Smyth before *Principles*, when he was in England. Neither could he have been 'welcome' after *Differences* (autumn 1608) registered the chasm between them; it must have been in between. Clifton was describing how Smyth the individual behaved when he was a (temporary) associate the leaders were 'glad of', in a period when, as earlier suggested, he was already living in Amsterdam, but was as yet unsupported by his own independent following. (Perhaps it was in this

⁶⁴ Carter *ERC*, 115,117; to Paget's delight, it was damaged during construction by a 'strong wind most furious from heaven' and had to be rebuilt; Sprunger *DP*, 50,55,87,92-3.

⁶⁵ T.White, *A Discovery of Brownism* 7,10,11,18; Lawne *PSB* 10,15-16,20,22-3,25,31,39; Clifton *Advertisement* 122; White *EST* 102-3; Bernard *PE*, 29

⁶⁶ H.Clapham, *Errors on the Right Hand*, 2, 36-7; Arber *Transcripts* 3, 367 gives registration date as 19 [?] January 1608'. Clapham tells us in *Error on the Left Hand*, (June 1608), that his two books were 'penned, almost together' [preface, A5v].

⁶⁷ Bradford, 'Dialogue', 134, Darrell *A Treatise of the Church...* Preface [6]; probably the Darrell charged in 1607 with nonconformity in Notts, Marchant *PCC*, 300-1; White *EST*, 124

period that Smyth 'began to practise physicke' again).⁶⁸ But he could not maintain good relations with the officers whilst continuing to attack 'open known sin' or the church government so closely bound up with it. His attention ^{turned} to the rejection of reading from books in the time of 'spiritual worship'. This was applied at first to translations (even of the Bible), and then to originals.⁶⁹ The issue of books was connected to formality, or routinism which led to spiritual deadness, hypocrisy, and an inability to distinguish between the holy and the profane, which led to the toleration of sin. empty show. Smyth argues that 'we must take heed of quenching the spirit', so that 'the matter is not brought out of the heart but out of the book'.⁷⁰

Ainsworth repeatedly asserted that the issue of translations had at first been the only source of controversy with Smyth.⁷¹ But by 26th September, 1608 Thomas Helwys reported a sharp difference in ecclesiology: 'Their ministry consisteth of Pastors and Teachers, ours of Pastors only', a summary form of the system later detailed in *Differences*. He also outlined views on the treasury later to be found in that book. There were, then, developed 'differences between our Brethren and us' on several fronts.⁷² *Differences* provided a crystal clear statement of its principled belief in a broad and flexible leadership: 'Thus shall all men that have excellency of gifts when they shall be added to the church be employed in the honourable sevice of the Church, whereas if there be but one pastor in a church, men of more excellent gifts being added to the Church shall sit still, leefe their gifts and look on: which alone is enough to overthrow the fancy of one pastor in the church...' ⁷³ In this writing of cOctober 1608, the church may also be congratulating itself on the practicality of its recent successful integration of the talents of such men as Helwys, Bromhead and Seamer - in sharp contrast to the reception by the Ancient Church of clergymen such as Thomas White, who could not be accommodated within its much more rigid structures.

In the first half of 1608, then, isolated in Amsterdam, John Smyth was for some time drawn into the milieu of the Ancient Church; yet both before (19 points and Principles) this phase, and after (*Differences*), he articulated serious disagreements with that Church. *Differences* is entitled not just a "correction" but also a "supplement" to *Principles*: the earlier work was still thought of as basically sound. Thus, details of its system of government and other arrangements are not reproduced, since they were not in need of 'correction'. Most of the queries which enlivened

⁶⁸ Clifton *Plea*, Reply to Smyth's Epistle, unpag; *Smyth1*, lxxxii; Clifton *PFI*, Preface [5];

⁶⁹ *Smyth2 Differences*, 286,302-3,305-6; W..Burgess *JSSB*, 174

⁷⁰ *Burrage2*, 27-31; *Smyth1 Differences* 277,

⁷¹ Ainsworth *A Defence...* 1-2; Clifton *Plea*, Answer to Mr Smyth's Epistle [1-2]; Ainsworth, *Defence*, 2

⁷² Lambeth MS 709, f117 printed, *Burrage2*, 167-8; *Smyth1*, *Differences* 269 .

⁷³ *Smyth1*, *Differences*, 314

Principles are absent from *Differences*, but there is still a sense of Smyth's relationship with others: the preface shifts back and forth between "I" and "we".⁷⁴

The changes in *Differences* all relate to the failure which Smyth found in the Ancient Church to separate the holy and the profane. This was most obviously the case in the operation of the treasury. There are several changes, notably exhortations for all, especially the rich, to contribute and not to burden the church unnecessarily; care was to be taken not to accept contributions which were in any way tainted.⁷⁵ Most importantly, the treasury, is now more firmly subordinated to the whole congregation: the deacons act 'as the hands of the Church', the 'servants of the Eldership and church'.⁷⁶ *Differences* also moves away from clerical hierarchy: ordination was 'nothing but the publishing of the officer's election with prayer made for him...' In *Principles*, 'The eldership consisteth of 3 sorts of persons or officers', but in *Differences* it must be 'uniform consisting of officers of one sort': the triformed variety is condemned as 'the invention of man'.⁷⁷ In *Principles*, the three officers are pastors, teachers and governors, each 'excelling in', having the 'chief care' of his speciality, but not exclusively competent in it, since all had to share in governing and teaching, and a pastor or teacher might administer the sacraments. In *Differences*, we still have pastors, teachers and governors, but these are 'several names of one and the same office' – further breaking down functional differences and moving towards complete interchangeability of roles.

In *Principles* the governor, unlike pastors and teachers, was not empowered to administer the sacraments, though he was to have been "conversant about the soule and spiritual part". In *Differences*, however the Elders 'may all administer the seales of the covenant'.⁷⁸ The change may seem to urge an increase in the powers of the governor, and not his control by the laity; but it reflected the view that the governor must not neglect the things of god in favour of a specialised role in the fleshly business of the church, or as its agent at its junction with the world. For Smyth and his followers, church politics was the servant of godliness. They were not pursuing the notion that power corrupts and should be controlled by democratic mechanisms. Yet in *Differences*, the powers of the church are re-articulated with particular sharpness: 'The Presbytery has no power, but what the Church hath and giveth unto it: which the Church upon just cause can take away.' For Ainsworth 'if the multitude govern, then who shall be governed? Christian liberty is one thing (which all have), the reins of government (which some have) is another thing.' Early in 1609 Smyth

⁷⁴ Smyth I, *Differences*, 274, 283-4, 292, 271

⁷⁵ Smyth I, *Differences*, 317, 319.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 318, 320, 316; cf., Ainsworth, *A Defence* 116-7.

⁷⁷ Smyth I, *Differences*, 273, 271, 307, 309, 314; *Principles* 256-8, 259.

argued that such views were 'one part of the Antichristianism in your church'.⁷⁹ He thought it "Antichristian to place the Elders as Rulers over the whole body of the Church... for that is an Antichristian usurpation", ascribing this view to both Bernard and Ainsworth. This, as he explained, involved "usurping the delegated power of Christ which he hath originally given to the body of his Church which is his mystical body."⁸⁰ The fact that such attitudes were not founded upon a canon of liberal or democratic values, is secondary. *Differences* articulated a powerful impulse towards practical lay control.

It has been suggested Johnson's innovation was a response to Smyth's conversion to anabaptism. Certainly, Johnson linked Smyth's anabaptism with democratic ecclesiology; admitted in 1610 that the Ancient Church was 'encumbered not a little' by anabaptists.⁸¹ But almost everyone in his congregation would have agreed that anabaptism was a loathsome heresy. If this was the problem, why did Johnson not simply urge them to close ranks against it, and expel the heretics using the existing apparatus? Bradford refers to unspecified 'contentions' as a reason for the Robinsonians' departure for Leyden; Smyth had already heard of them by 24 March 1609 only a few weeks after his rebaptism.⁸² Amongst the new arrivals in Amsterdam there was surely a fresher sense of the injustice which had been meted out to them, of the losses and physical dangers they had endured and resentment of the hierarchies responsible; the recently chosen officers of the Smyth group were seen as servants of the congregation; they had not participated in the long process through which the Ancient Church leaders had established pre-eminent influence in their own congregation. In such respects Smyth's as yet separatist congregation set a most unfortunate example to Johnson's own dissidents. He feared even the limited scope for congregational influence provided in his own church which had, or might soon, lead to renewed challenges (perhaps fuelled by discontent with Studley), and unpredictable innovations, threatening the precarious toleration of the Dutch synods. At just about this time the arguments in Holland over war and theology reached their peak, and Paget, hand in glove with the Dutch, thundered that Brownism led to Anabaptism. Johnson was aware of Paget's official status and respectable membership, which might prove

⁷⁸ Ibid 259-60, *Smyth I*, *Differences*, 313, 307.

⁷⁹ *Smyth2 PCO* (1609) 328-9; *ibid* 416, 421, 424, 429, 435-40; Ainsworth, *Counterpoison* 176-7.

⁸⁰ *Smyth2 PCO* (1609), 416-7, 436, 395; S. Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints*, 178-80 quotes in support of the idea that Smyth differed little in ecclesiology from other separatists his view that "all the saints shall yield obedience to the elders in things commanded by God", but not his continuation: "and the Elders shall all of them obey the voice of the Church in the things commanded by God"!! [*Smyth2* 435]

⁸¹ White *EST* 142-8; the corollary is that Smyth's turn had been a matter of his own voluntary choice; Johnson, *Tell the Church*, Preface; Johnson in Clifton *An Advertisment*, 50; *ibid* 90.

⁸² Bradford *OPP*, 16; *Smyth2 CB*, 664.

attractive for some of his own people. And hence, as Matthew Slade explained later, 'their own discipline and Separation, which Johnson in some points disclaimed and desired to be more conform [sic] to the reformed churches. Ainsworth withstood him...' ⁸³ These several factors, rather than merely fear of anabaptism, led Johnson and Studley to try to reinforce their position. They sought to impose a more centralised polity, in the hope of improving their credit with the Dutch Calvinists, impressing respectable potential deserters to Paget with their own disciplinary firmness, and discouraging the now greater potential of challengers and deviants. The move detonated a violent internal struggle; though Clifton was won over, it was largely in response that John Robinson and his followers made their exit to Leyden. In early 1610, Robinson referred to Johnson as 'immoderately jealous for the officers' dignity'. ⁸⁴

There was something of 'popularity' in Smyth's views, and not only in the organization of his church. He raged at Bernard's 'penny pamphlets' in defence of the official church, his 'vehement desire to the parsonage of Sawenby'. Thus, 'you could not buy or sell except you received the mark of the beast, now you are content to yield to all, yea and to plead for all, that you may traffic with your merchandise.' These ferocious shafts clearly had a political as well as a religious charge. It may well be that the drive towards reinstating the primitive apostolic church (in its Smyth and other variants, including that of Barrow) reflected resentment at the riches accumulated by such as 'your gross non-residents and idle bellies the Cathedral or Collegiate Priests, your double beneficed men'. ⁸⁵ Images of servitude also appeared: the offices of 'parish assemblies', whether or not in the hands of a 'dumbdrinking swaggering priest', were 'merely and wholly subject and in bondage to the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy... to whom they daily yield Spiritual homage and Subjection in their oaths of Canonical obedience, and actions of like Servitude.' ⁸⁶

The Smyth group was not designing a system in order that it conformed to democratic principles. The power of 'binding and loosing' was that crucial means whereby a church might either purge itself of known sin, or become profaned. But Smyth sometimes sought to justify his theoretical ideas by reference to the external world: 'For ordination is nothing in respect of election, as you may see in all Societies and corporations whatsoever' and the passage goes on to compare the election of the pastor with 'the contract which is the mutual consent of a man and a woman for marriage'. The Smyth congregation was in advance of other separatists in regard to women. In at

⁸³ Letter to Carleton 17 Jan 1618 in *Slade*, ed Nijenhuis, 76

⁸⁴ Lawne *PSB*, 74,75,87; Robinson *JS*, 149,233-5; in Ainsworth *Animadversion*, 117

⁸⁵ *Smyth2 PCO*, 331,462,491

⁸⁶ *Smyth2 PCO* (1609), 467,480; for even more violent sentiments see *Barrow2*, 322,259

least some matters, argued *Paralleles* [1609]: ‘if any dissent, they may speak either women or youth, and yet the rule of the Apostle not violated.’⁸⁷ It is true that women are here equated with children, in patriarchal fashion. But the concession of the right to speak in certain circumstances reflected the partial acceptance of a logic of sainthood which constantly **tended** to subordinate other measures of an individual, such as gender or status - to the root of the matter - whether he or she exhibited the signs of saving faith. This privileged the energy and responsibility of all, other than small children, which in turn tended to undermine internal hierarchy practically.

Hostile to liturgical formality, the group evolved an analogous repudiation of any hard division of labour amongst the officers. The pastorate acted mainly as the mouthpiece of the church and as guarantor of order in the last resort. Thus, the church’s identity rested hardly at all upon the authority of the officers. It was founded mainly upon the direct collective inspiration to be found in the preaching, prophesy and prayer of all the members, and from its source, the immediate presence amongst them of the risen Christ. This deep sense of the spirituality of religious experience flourished within deliberately ‘primitive’ means of practical intercourse, reinforcing the sense that members’ efforts to lead godly lives and to know the good things of Christ should be constrained with as few preset rules, institutions and other mediating clutter as possible.

The internal practice of Smyth’s group had always allowed it scope for initiative and innovation and admitted of little clerical restraint. This enabled the extension of the logic of its view of the church, in areas such as its rejection of succession through ordination. Believers’ baptism was also connected to the group’s core convictions about the nature of visible sainthood. In 1608 Smyth had argued, against the use of translations, that even children were able to read them, and children by rights ‘cannot perform any part of spiritual worship’. Ainsworth commented, ‘the Devil seemed to put it in his heart to write this, as a ground of his anabaptism, whereunto soon after he drew’, that children were incapable of baptism. He was right to connect the later innovation to the earlier ideas.⁸⁸ The logic of its intellectual development was connected with the implicitly democratic practice of the church - the two were mutually self-reinforcing.

6. Smyth and Helwys embrace believers’ baptism

The Character of the Beast, in which Smyth outlines his antipaedobaptist ideas consists mainly of a letter from Richard Clifton, dated March 14 [1609] and his own reply of March 24, in which

⁸⁷ *Smyth2 PCO* (1609), 494,429,430; *Smyth1, Principles* 256; *Ainsworth Counterpoyson*, 176

⁸⁸ *Ainsworth, A Defence* 63; *Smyth1 Differences*, 292; *Smyth2 CB*, 567-8

Smyth defends 'the practice of that which is done by us' (already).⁸⁹ It is now accepted that he did baptise himself. Robinson reported this 'as I have heard from themselves'. 'Mr Smyth anabaptised himself with water', says Ainsworth: 'he and his followers having dischurched themselves and dissolved their communion; yet he in that state, preached, and anabaptised himself and then anabaptised others.' Clifton confirms that Smyth baptised himself and 'gave over his office as did the deacons, and devised to enter a new constitution'. Smyth explicitly defended se-baptism. The likely method was by affusion, not immersion - Hall says 'in a bason'.⁹⁰

The only extant source for the church order is a reply of Hugh and Anne Bromhead to a letter of July 13 from William Hamerton in London. As Burgess noted, this includes verbatim reproductions of passages in Smyth's letter to Clifton of 24 March 1609, so the Bromheads were writing in 1609, later than 13 July, and must therefore refer to the post re-baptism period.⁹¹ The services described are remarkably austere. Unlike *Differences* no singing is mentioned; there is only reading, expounding, prophesy and prayer. In the morning service, a series of "speakers", not distinguished from each other either by status or technical function, address the gathering. These are *not* ranked in importance by the time allotted to them. Although the first speaker might speak for 45 minutes or more, the second would speak 'the like tyme and space, some time more, some time less'. The first speaker is the one to conclude 'with prayer as he began with prayer, with an exhortation to contribution to the poor'; this may be Smyth, identified later as 'our pastor'. But if so, the writers did not think it important enough to identify him in their account of the service. Afternoon service continued till '5 or 6 of the clock', and then 'the execution of the government of the church is handled'. This suggests that all remained for the business, and that no special business meeting was ordinarily held. The writers pay no attention to formal structures, though they report 'a godly free and right choice of Ministers and other officers'; clearly, Smyth's new church had little in the way of a clerical hierarchy, and had evolved more informal arrangements since separatist days.⁹²

⁸⁹ It is not clear whether these are 4/14th or 14/24th, but the exchange was March 1609. The Dexters dated it (and Smyth's rebaptism) a year earlier [*England and Holland*, 458-60], since a baptist mentioned by Henoah Clapham was 'undoubtedly' Smyth. S. Brachlow has recently disinterred this claim [CS, 150], in which Clapham (*Left Hand*, 22-3) has 'William', a member of two Dutch Anabaptist varieties and then a Seeker, all by the time of writing in January 1608. John Smyth had none of these qualifications.

⁹⁰ Robinson *ORC*, 48; Ainsworth *Defence* 69,82; *Smyth2* 659,660,757; Clifton *PFI*, 178-9, preface [2]; Gerntz to Leyden, (*EEB1*, 209-11); E. Jessop *Discovery of the Errors*, 65; I.H., *A Description of the Church of Christ*, 23; Robinson, Ainsworth, Hall (*CA* xxxvi) and Helwys (*Declaration of Faith* clause 14) all refer to affusion

⁹¹ Burgess *JSSB* 168-70 prints extracts of the corresponding passages, for which, *Smyth2*, 667-9

⁹² *Harleian MSS* 36, ff70-1 substantially reprinted in *Burrage2*, 172-6; *Smyth2 CB*, 674, 679.

The most controversial aspect of Smyth's career was his decision to rebaptise himself. Why did he not seek baptism from the Dutch Mennonites? The decision did not arise from any difficulty over the mode of baptism, since both he and they certainly practised affusion, and the idea that Smyth was unaware of their existence is risible. The chief reason probably relates to Smyth's ideas on the question of succession in ordination. To the 1607 sections of *Paralleles*, he made only one substantial change in 1609, arguing that if the ministry 'come by succession from the apostle's hands, through the churches of Rome and the Grecians... our whole cause of Separation lieth in the dust and we must disclaim our schism which we have made'. But if the ministry was 'given first to the body of the church, the faithful, though they be but two or three' then 'we and those churches only which raise up their ministry from the election, approbation and ordination of a faithful people are the true church of Christ having the true ministry of Christ.'

Now even in 1607, Smyth had been hostile to the baptism of the English Church, whose falsity, generally, made it false. But the rejection of succession by ordination further undermined the status of baptism from the angle of consistent separatism. *Paralleles* does not theorise the priesthood as the basis of the falsity of the official church, but neither does it present this clearly in the traditional manner as originating with its false constitution (membership). Smyth summed up: 'well Mr Bern...I have laboured to manifest the main cause of our Separation, the first foundation and rock of truth, which is that Christ's ministerial power is given to two or three faithful ones... if they deny this ground there is no footing for them but in Succession and the Popes chair'.⁹³ The denunciation of 'succession through ordination' acted to concentrate the odium attaching to the English and Roman churches upon their priesthoods, as the agents of the transmission of corruption down the years, and it concentrated responsibility for beginning afresh with the two or three faithful. By positing the carnal nature of all 'succession' *Paralleles* excluded on theoretical grounds the need to seek or assess candidate baptizers. This explains why John Smyth did not look for his new beginning to existing churches such as the Mennonites.⁹⁴

But the adoption of believers' baptism, as set out in *CB*, substituted a different angle of attack on the claims of official churches. It hinged upon the falsity not of their ministry but of their constitution (membership). 'Spiritual succession' need not now be counterposed in principle to succession in ordination. It could appear as part of the larger continuity of visible churches, to be

⁹³ *Smyth2* PCO (1609) 464,529; in *Parallele* 10 (churches and ministers), the 1607 response (2pp) is expanded to 37pp. *Smyth2* 461-3,463-500

⁹⁴ White *EST*, 133 describes Smyth's failure to go to them as 'rather odd', suggesting christological heresies wrongly imputed to them as the cause.

constituted through a covenant with God. At one point, Smyth does indeed draw this conclusion. He argues, though cautiously, that since 'no manner of sin made the Church of old Testament a false church', 'I am persuaded that if the Papacy, or England, or the Greek Churches did only baptise men confessing their Faith and their sins into Christ the son of god, or into the Trinity, though they retained their false ministry worship and Government, and other their abominations yet the baptism was true and not to be repeated.'⁹⁵ This explicitly states the principle that the truth of a church depends on its constitution, and is not disabled by its practice of succession in ordination.

This statement, however, is completely alone. Smyth did not repudiate *Paralleles* and published it later hardly amended. The book's strength was in its primary emotional appeal. The usurpation of religious authority by successive phalanxes of apostate priests helped drive the faithful towards accepting the heavy responsibility of founding a new communion. But this gave rise to one unavoidable paradox; the collective nature of church refounding by two or three conflicted with the fact that baptism, fundamental to this, could be originated only by one as yet unbaptised and unchurched. Finally, the group settled on the means to break the implacably circular logic of their dilemma. Whilst he continued to view ministerial succession as anti-Christian, Smyth's se-baptism offered him and his friends the only way to reach the door out of Babylon. Within weeks of this, Smyth regretted it. But having reached new views on succession, he was still carrying his congregation with him on the basis of the old.

From the standpoint of *Paralleles* 1) it was the right and duty of **any** two or three faithful to reject as carnal all ministerial succession and found the church anew. According to the logic of *CB* however, 2) the right to found a church anew was restricted to the **first** two or three faithful, in conditions of total apostacy. The second, however, suggested that the group should have gone to the Mennonites for their baptism – provided the latter was a true church. As long as he was in any doubt on this last point, it would be understandable for Smyth to resist a new upheaval, not least because his most prominent supporter did not share Smyth's new view of the succession. By late March 1609 Smyth had moved from 1) to 2) but was unwilling to argue it amongst his supporters, until about the end of the year, when he decided to apply to the Mennonites.

7 The English Baptists and the Mennonites

It is not known exactly when the Smyth church made its first contact with the Mennonites. Some short review of their development is unavoidable. The tendency had emerged after a period of

⁹⁵ *Smyth2* CB 579-80,582,586,644-6

extreme difficulty. Insurrectionist beginnings were met with a ferocious repression, which the Dutch Anabaptism survived 'but only by reacting sharply against the excesses which had made it notorious', becoming 'averse from all matters of state...' 'Theirs was a faith which taught how to bear persecution with dignity'. Already by the forties 'the anabaptists were now averse to violence and the use of force'.⁹⁶ War with Spain brought a further transformation. William of Orange began to urge a measure of toleration and in 1577, the anabaptists of Middleburg were granted protection by his order. Calvinist hostility continued but was characterised by aggressive rhetoric rather than bloodletting.⁹⁷ It may be that the first Waterlander confession drafted by Hans de Ries in September 1577 reflected a certain adaptation to Calvinism. From about 1580, the leaders of urban Waterlander tendency of the Mennonites softened their commitment to pacifist positions. They replaced the oath with a vow 'by manly truth'. To avoid bearing arms, they paid a fee, 'fulfilling their obligations to the government in special services such as providing food, extinguishing fires and digging trenches.' 'By 1581, the Waterlanders permitted their members to hold government offices and after that time many of this branch held such office'.⁹⁸

The urban Mennonites became 'good friends of the Fatherland, thankful for the ground upon which they lived and for the protection they received.' This outlook seems to have encouraged moves towards unity. The 'conciliated brotherhood' (1601) led by Lubert Gerritz abandoned both 'separation from the world', and the label 'Mennonite', renaming themselves *doopsgezinde* (baptism minded). By the nineties, relatives of 'the old Amsterdam patriciate' were Anabaptists, including the wife of C.P. Hooft, who thought persecution an "economic heresy". 'Baptist shippers and investors in particular' built a reputation for scrupulously observing 'the bounds of a norm of decency' (like Quakers in a later time).⁹⁹ Waterlanders such as Hans de Ries from Alkmaar, who had left the Reformed faith disillusioned by its militarism, seems to have brought to his new faith some of the theological thinking of the old. (De Ries was a doctor, like Smyth, and had perhaps learned English from his wife; perhaps it was he with whom Smyth made contact.)¹⁰⁰ Ries's personal contribution fitted with a larger trend, in which the 'liberal' urban Waterlanders built bridges with the dominant culture. As they overcame isolationist tendencies and were received into

⁹⁶ Geyl, *RN* 58, 79, but see J. Stayer, *AS*, 293-300

⁹⁷ Duke & Tamse, *Britain and the Netherlands* 7, 45, 63; G Parker, *The Dutch Revolt*, 37, 57. A. Mellink in *The Dutch Dissenters* ed I.B. Horst, 128-142; C. Krahn *Dutch Anabaptism* 246-51

⁹⁸ C. Dyck, 'The first Waterlander Confession of Faith' *MQR* 36 (1962), 5-13; idem, 'A Short Confession of Faith by Hans de Ries', *MQR* 38 (1964) 5-19; Zijpp, 'Confessions of Faith', *MQR* 29 (1955) 171-187.

⁹⁹ J. Stayer, *AS*, 326-7; *Mennonite Encyclopedia* I, 681, 102; Bangs, *Arminius*, 123; C. Krahn *DA*, 249; Tex I, 303, 348; G. Williams *Radical Reformation*, 775-8, 824-5

Coggins *JSC* 72-3, C.J. Van Dyck, 'Hans De Ries...' (Chicago PhD, 1962)

respectable society, they began to absorb the language of Luther and Calvin, the common currency of its religious discourse; this further reduced the suspicion attaching to them. These peculiarities of Dutch Anabaptism help explain why Smyth and his friends encountered an organisation which did not appear so different from those of respectable puritanism.

Meanwhile, Arminius and his opponents discussed high theory, but by 1608 the controversy provided 'the linguistic convention by which many people talked about the whole complex problem of the future of their national, economic, social and religious life.'¹⁰¹ 'A stream of pamphlets burst forth.... From the pulpit there resounded denunciations of the bad patriots. To many zealots any treaty with Spain appeared to be a betrayal of the cause of the revolt.' Arminius and his adherents were 'jeered at in the streets and sometimes boycotted. Parents took their children away from Leiden to study under the strict Calvinist Lubbertus at Franeker'.¹⁰² In the pulpits of Amsterdam, High Calvinist preachers were especially virulent: Arminius was said to teach that the Pope was a member of the church of Christ, and even that he had caused territorial losses to Spinola. By the start of 1608, 'the truce was the volatile topic of the day' and the country was 'sharply divided' into war and peace parties. During the 'frantic days of 1608' there developed an 'atmosphere of hysteria.' Arminius was said to be an agent of the Jesuits, of having been bribed by the pope, of encouraging military weakness; in vain did he protest against "being daily aspersed with the filthy scum of fresh calumnies." Even in December 1608, with opposition to the truce ebbing, he was subject to 'constant attacks' in the city.¹⁰³

High Calvinism was overwhelmingly the theology of the war party: they 'glorified war from their pulpits'; opponents, though heterogenous, drifted towards mutual accommodation. Thus, Arminius had promised to prepare a refutation of Anabaptism, but delayed interminably. When in December 1607, he finally delivered his *Contra Anabaptista*, he did not attack Mennonites or their books but merely recapitulated what he took to be the Reformed position; the key questions of free will and predestination do not seem to have figured in this very restrained 'attack'. Considered as purely theological currents, the Arminians and high Calvinists were close; they debated in a common language alien from that of, say, the anabaptists, at least in origin. But considered politically, the 'Arminians' reflected the pressure of the disparate interests in tacit alliance with them, including Mennonites, "libertines", and even many 'catholics and crypto-catholics' in the

¹⁰¹ Geyl, *NSC*, 43-44; Bangs *Arminius*, 275.

¹⁰² Geyl, *RN* 251; A. Harrison, *The Beginnings of Arminianism*, 81,85; Bangs *Arminius*, 303-4; Tex II, 448

¹⁰³ Arminius quoted in Harrison *BA*, 89; *ibid* 90,105,106; Bangs *Arminius*, 292,295-6,303-4,299,320.

town governments.¹⁰⁴ The concurrent dispute over toleration of Roman Catholicism was also related to both war and theology. For the high Calvinists, the advocates of peace with Spain were the collaborators of Rome. They were as reluctant to tolerate Catholicism amongst the Dutch population as to sign a truce with the Spanish catholic state.¹⁰⁵ The peace party generally was in favour of toleration. In their very heterogeneity, Remonstrants, Lutherans, Mennonites (despite their quietism) and others, stood opposed to the confessional state.

The first clear evidence that the Smyth group had embraced general redemption is from after its application to the Mennonites, though Smyth already had started to worry about whether unbaptised infants stood in a state of grace. The fact that the Helwys group also embraced a new theological standpoint strongly suggests that this new innovation had been made before the split. The twin facts that it emerged about the same time as other more clearly Mennonite views and the fact that Helwys, who rejected everything else specifically associated with the Mennonites, thanked them for 'discovering our errors' to us suggests that this may have been the immediate source of the new ideas.¹⁰⁶ The suggestion that the English Baptists learned their new theological ideas because they rediscovered Peter Baro, who was anathema for orthodox puritans when Smyth was at Cambridge seems quite unrealistic.¹⁰⁷ It is possible that Thomas Helwys embraced unlimited religious toleration as a result of his acceptance of conceptions which afforded a greater stress on the theoretical freedom of individuals. But a symbiotic relationship between these elements is surely far more likely. The Baptists had not long escaped the attentions of Bancroft. Revulsion at forcing men's consciences must have played a role in their adoption of views which struck out for a measure of human free-will. In Holland the adherents of such views were Arminian Remonstrants and Mennonites. The forces of repression were led by Gomarus and the High Calvinists. Paget was their chief ally amongst the English, but the Ancient Church leaders, with whom the Baptists were in dispute, were also in the 'orthodox' camp. It is inconceivable that the Baptists did not register these facts. Helwys soon rejected almost all the views of the Mennonites, but their attitude to high Calvinist dogmatics surely cut with the grain.

Smyth and his group were not at first much bothered by their own immediate relations with the Dutch state or by the theoretical issues raised by it. When the issue of magistratical power was

¹⁰⁴ Geyl *NSC*, 45; Bangs *Arminius*, 167-71, 87, 387.

¹⁰⁵ Geyl *RN*, 253 Geyl *NSC*, 39-40

¹⁰⁶ Helwys, *Advertisement*, 5; *Mennonite Encyclopaedia* [3,830] claims the Remonstrants at first used Hans de Ries's confession of faith'.

¹⁰⁷ Whitley, *Smyth I*, cvii; L. Kliever, 'General Baptist Origins: the question of Anabaptist influence', for Baro, eg H. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (1958), 378-86.

posed for the first time in *CB*, Smyth was relaxed: 'there may many questions be made' of this issue, which he was unable to answer, but God 'will direct us into the truth'. There is no doubt that direct links were made some time before autumn 1609. Helwys recalled 'You came publicly among us.. [and] have destroyed the faith of men thereby'. It was surely contact with the Mennonites that occasioned Smyth's new concern in the preface to *CB* about issues such as the sabbath, christology and magistrates on which they held views different from English puritans. By early 1610, however, Smyth and his allies in the congregation had decided to apply for just such a union. Clifton says that 'not above ten' persons were members in the Helwys group, which issued its first public statement, early the following year.¹⁰⁸

Three newly contentious issues - christology, magistracy and the sabbath ^{are} mentioned in the *CB* preface (probably autumn 1609), and all suggest the Smyth congregation had made contact with the Mennonites. There were practical reasons why Smyth may have found them attractive. A scholar such as himself was probably impressed by able thinkers such as de Ries, with his roots in Reformed theology. The Waterlanders had a stable organisation and an irenic spirit very different from that of the factious emigration. Smyth had uttered more than his share of 'biting and bitter words, phrases and speeches' from several mutually inconsistent positions, which he soon sought to 'utterly retract and revoke'. Having decided that his recent se-baptism had not provided the basis for the true church, he no longer felt able adopt a censorious tone, regretting, perhaps for the first time, his earlier breaches of 'the rules of love and charity'. The pacific spirit of the Mennonites had a strange anti-statist aspect, but they offered an orderly and peaceful solution to the congregational disorder, and factious mentality, rooted in his own over-zealousness, as well as his disorderly baptism. Smyth and most of his followers now effectively repudiated their denial of succession through ordination and set about trying to undo the mistake to which this theory had led them. (There is no extant theorisation of the change, but it is acknowledged in Smyth's *Last Book*.) They applied to the Amsterdam Waterlanders for admission to their congregation; this was some time before 12 March 1610, when Helwys and three colleagues wrote to the Waterlanders advising against their acceptance.¹⁰⁹

Helwys still intransigently opposed successionism. He wrote to the Mennonites on 12 March 1610 that 'the whole cause in quest being Succession... consider, we beseech you, how it is Antichrist's chief hold and that it is Jewish and ceremonial, an ordinance of the old Testatment and

¹⁰⁸ *Smyth2*, (CB), 572; Helwys, *Advertisement*, 5; *Smyth2* (CB) 571, Clifton *PFT* 'Answer to Mr Smyth' [2 marg]; *A Declaration of Faith of English . at Amsterdam*, main text printed in Burgess *JSSB* 212-219

¹⁰⁹ *Smyth2*, 754, 756-7; 681; MS B1351 printed, *Burrage2*, 185-7

not of the New'. Helwys does **not** argue on the basis that the Mennonites lineage was false or doubtful, or that doctrinal defects might invalidate their claim to be a true church. His objection to 'succession' is to lineage in principle. Helwys did not believe he was saying anything new. His views on this matter had not changed since his rebaptism in early 1609, when he had rejected material succession in principle, just as Smyth had laid down in *Paralleles*. Smyth had abandoned this position, and now said the church 'must come by succession, contrary to his former profession'.¹¹⁰ When Helwys charged him with inconsistency, Smyth replied defensively: 'I did never acknowledge it, that it was lawful for private persons to baptise, when there were true churches and ministers, from whence we might have our baptism without sin, as there are 40 witnesses that can testify'. Smyth does **not** here try to claim to have said that such a baptism was unlawful; he thus confirms his own failure to come down firmly for either standpoint.

Helwys's dispute, therefore, was primarily with John Smyth, whom he saw as having abandoned his old position, and only secondarily with the Mennonites. Probably early in 1610 he and about ten others were confident enough to expel the larger number who followed Smyth. Thus, Helwys urged the Mennonites to reject 'certain who were of us' who 'are justly excluded from the communion of saints and are now attempting to join themselves to you', so that 'you will not be defiled by them'.¹¹¹ Helwys was not, at first, concerned about the doctrinal or other defects of the Mennonites, but about Smyth's false reason for deeming it necessary to join them. Indeed his short Latin letter, opened warmly ('Dearest Brothers in the bond of faith') and in the slightly later English letter of March 12 1610, they appear guilty only by association with Smyth.

The application to the Waterlanders was **not** made by a congregation. Smyth and his friends believed his self-baptism and their subsequent baptisms had been 'contrary to the order instituted by Christ', and had fatally undermined the foundations of the church. So the application listed 'names of the English'. These individuals sought 'to unite with the true church of Christ as quickly as possible', urging 'unanimously' that this be 'signified to the Church'; (Smyth's name appears third, after Bromhead and Neville). A confession, 'Corde Credimus', followed before March 12.¹¹² According to Gerritz 'most of the brethren, only a few excepted' were for accepting the Smyth group without rebaptism. But this opposed by other leaders of the Bevredigde Broederschap (Conciliated Brethren). The Amsterdam and Alkmaar leaders tried to convene a

¹ English letter of March 12 1610, in Burgess, *JSSB* 190-1; 'Declaration' Sig B, *ibid* 261

¹¹¹ Clifton, *Plea*, Preface; Latin Letter MS #B 1349, *Burroughs* 2 181, trans Coggins, *JSC* 171

conference of the Broederschap, but most leaders declined to attend. Still, a meeting was held on 23 May; it has been suggested (plausibly) that a revised version of Hans de Ries's Middleburg Confession was discussed as a basis for unity here, and also (convincingly) that Smyth was the author (not translator) of a Latin 'Defence of Ries Confession'.¹¹³ But the Smyth group was not admitted on the basis of that document. The Waterlanders were Association members who had sought to convene a representative conference to discuss this issue, and could not now act unilaterally without the consent of the absent majority without immediately causing a breach. Negotiations continued.

Helwys later thanked God, 'that hath prevented you from making them to be one with you, whereby you had strengthened them in their evil and enlarged your own sin exceedingly', indicating that he knew the admission of Smyth and his friends had suffered a set-back.¹¹⁴ The Short confession seems to have been revised to accommodate the special peculiarities of the Smyth group, and further changes may have been made on May 23rd. But the issue of admission was still unresolved on 16 July 1610 n.s., when the Amsterdam leaders wrote asking what aspects their Friesland counterparts found unacceptable. They 'scarcely knew what to answer [to Smyth] that this affair is put off such a long time', and tried to enlist the support of the Leeuwarden ministers for acting unilaterally if progress were not made 'within a fortnight'. These two letters confirm that the issue was the acceptance of a group of individuals into the Amsterdam congregation, not the admission of a new congregation to the Broederschap. The Friesland leaders could not deny absolutely their colleagues' freedom to admit individual members, for this was in principle a matter for the individual congregation. But the influx of such numbers, with their distinctive views and traditions, pressed this principle to its limits: the new people were united by language and would worship together. The reference by the Leeuwarden ministers to an 'alliance or union' with Smyth and his group signalled what they thought 'admission' would mean. It would alter the character of the Amsterdam congregation in a direction likely to harden pre-existing differences between it and the other association members. Amsterdam, if it acted unilaterally, threatened the 'ruin, harm, hurt

¹¹² MS B1347, text translated *EEB1*, 247-52, corrected names in *Burridge2*, 178. Coggins (JSC, 79, 84, 94) treats the issue as the Smyth group's membership (as a group) of the larger Mennonite community; *Corde Credimus*, *Smyth2* 682-4; translated *EEB1*, 253-4 and Burgess, *JSSB* 200-2.

¹¹³ MS 1357; translation of Gerritz, *EEB1*, 211-3; the Dutch version MS B 1364 of Smyth's Latin defence was apparently a translation by Reynier Wybrants for Gerritz's congregation [Coggins JSC 89-91; English translation, *ibid* 172-94; cf Whitley, *Smyth2*, 772]

¹¹⁴ Helwys *Advertisement*, 40; this work was at least the second published by him in 1611, so it is almost certain that Helwys knew the outcome of the conference of May 23 1610 (cf, Coggins JSC 98).

and perdition of the churches concerning the Westerland peacemaking or union', ie the break-up of the Broederschap.¹¹⁵

It seems that the Amsterdam Waterlanders remained members of the Broederschap, most of whose leaders had opposed the admission of Smyth and his friends. The Waterlanders had a liberal approach to Smyth's first baptism, but to recognise it as legitimate was also practically essential, for they could not otherwise continue relations with a group conceded to be disorderly. This would have been insupportable for the Dutch; equally, completely separate existence would be insupportable for the English, divesting them of legitimacy on either their own judgement or that of the Waterlanders. This determined the main parameters of the solution adopted. The Waterlanders could not admit Smyth and his friends formally, but offered them tacit recognition as a group, and close practical association on an informal basis, through continued accommodation at Munter's bakehouse premises. Helwys tells us that Smyth's members 'do come to worship with you', and 'gaze at you who speak to them in a strange tongue' and implies that they met separately too. But as he also explained, Smyth and his friends were now 'walking by no rule of Christ, not being under his yoke'.¹¹⁶

Thus, they found themselves in ecclesial limbo, unable to go forward or back; the only means to church themselves was blocked by the Mennonites. Smyth must have been daunted by this insurmountable obstacle, and failed to elaborate new theoretical views: they were sure to conflict with practice. Certainly, such unprecedented reticence did not result from his last illness, which began only seven weeks before his death in August 1612.¹¹⁷ Matters altered only in 1615, when, after the disintegration of the Broederschap, the Waterlanders felt able to extend full membership to those of the English remaining after John Smyth's death. On January 20 1615, twenty-six English people publicly affirmed their commitment to the faith of the Waterlander Mennonites; these were accepted into the church without a new baptism.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Letters from Amsterdam and Leeuwarden (MSS 1362, 1363) trans, *EEB1* 215-8; Leeuwarden elders worried that Smyth's friends might 'unite themselves with you' (not "us"); MS 1358, *ibid* 214-5.

¹¹⁶ Helwys, *Advertisement*, 39, 40

¹¹⁷ Smyth buried 1 Sept 1612 at the Nieuwe Kerke in Amsterdam, *Smyth1*, cxiii, Burgess, *JSSB*, 237; 'The Life and Death of John Smyth' reprinted, *ibid* 266-9; this biography forms part of *The Confession of Faith published in Certain Conclusions by the Remaynders of Mr Smythe's company* (1612). It comprises 1) an epistle to the reader, by TP (Thomas Piggot) 2) 'Propositions and conclusions.', 3) 'The last book of John Smyth called the Retraction of his Errors and the Confirmation of the Truth', and 4) 'The Life and death of John Smyth'. The composite is printed Burgess, *JSSB*, 239-69. Whitley prints 2) and 3) in *Smyth2* 733-60. 'Propositions' 2) exists in a second form, MS B1365; a retranslation of this appeared in *EEB1*, 257-75; book and retranslation differ slightly. It is impossible to be sure which was modified from which; for opinions see Coggins, *JSC* 109, *Smyth2*, 776; Burgess, *JSSC*, 245.

¹¹⁸ K. Sprunger, 'English Puritans and Anabaptists' *MQR* 46 (1972), 113-28

At first Helwys's letters to the Waterlanders were friendly; it was Smyth whose error he sought to combat. But as the greater underlying similarity of Smyth's positions and those of the Mennonites became clear, Helwys attitude to them hardened. In 1611, he was still able to concede that they had at first 'been instruments of good in discovering divers of our errors unto us'. But his resentment had grown: 'you have made our friends our enemies, yea our familiar friends, with whom we took sweet counsel and went together to the House of God.' 'Hereby have you glorified your church and set her up to sit as a Queen, taking unto yourselves all power and authority, yea, even to shut the gates of the holy city and the heavenly Jerusalem, saying that none may enter but by *your* authority.'¹¹⁹ Helwys was confirmed in his suspicion of clerical authority. No one should 'believe or profess any thing because it is the judgement or exposition of Mr Calvin, Mr Beza, Mr Perkins, or any other'. He accused the Mennonites of 'seeking to tread us under your feet, which you do, in advancing yourselves over us to bring us in subjection', which strikingly confirms the potency of appeals to liberty in these circles.

But this was not the liberty of the masses. On magistracy, and even on the Sabbath, Helwys betrayed his deep fear of concessions to a 'popularity' he associated with profanity and subversion of the social order.¹²⁰ His social outlook jarred with other features of Mennonite thinking and practice, which he clearly felt involved concessions to popular looseness. The 'popularity' cultivated in his own small group, which seems to have contained several respectable, well-educated persons, was very different from that of the Mennonites, with their roots amongst wider layers of the population including (perhaps especially) small artisans and craftsmen.¹²¹ Thus, he challenged them to show 'that you do not so much seek to heap multitudes together, and build up great churches and congregations, as to gather together a holy people and build up pure churches'. He connected Mennonite populism with their errors: 'please not your selves in your multitudes, walking in so many errors as you do.' He refers to the 'many among you', 'polluted' by breaking the Sabbath. It seems that such strictures, and his contemptuous reference to 'a sort of women that are void of understanding' in Smyth's group, are all aimed against concessions to popularity conceived in this sense, and diluting the 'pure' church of an educated elite.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Helwys, *Advertisement* 35, 33,36 (his emphases).

¹²⁰ Quoted, Burgess, *JSSB* 210; Helwys, *Advertisement*, 23-4.

¹²¹ *Mennonite Encyclopaedia* IV, 895; see K. Sprunger, 'Jan Theunitz...' *MQR* (1994), 437-60, a printer, bookseller, linguist and keeper of a 'a lively Amsterdam eating and drinking establishment' who also ran a gin distillery [!], and was banned by the Waterlanders in 1626.

¹²² Helwys, *Advertisement*, 81, 83, 17, 40

The Baptists in England 1611-1638

1 Helwys and Murton in London

During the eight years following Helwys's *Mysterie of Iniquity*, five works were issued by the Baptists in England. The first was an MS petition, "A most Humble supplication of divers poor prisoners", calendared under 1613, but probably sent some months later, for consideration of the Parliament which met 6 April 1614. In 1615 appeared *Obiections: Answered by way of dialogue*, and in 1618 *A very plain and well grounded treatise concerning baptisme*. In 1620, were issued *A most humble supplication...* and Murton's *A Description of What God hath Predestinated*.¹

The authorship of *Obiections* (1615) is uncertain. It was reported in 1645 that 'some thirty years since, Mr Morton, a teacher of a church of the Anabaptists in Newgate, then his confession comprehended all the errors of the Arminians'.² Though this has been taken to refer to *Objections*, published exactly thirty years earlier, that work is not a confession but a petition for religious toleration, which does not raise theological issues. It recalls of the bishops that in 1603 'with my own ears I heard some of their chief followers say, when his highness was coming unto England, "Now must steeples down, and wee shall have no more high commission" (with lamentation they spake it)'. Murton, a farrier of Gainsborough, was twenty-five when he married Jane Hodgkin in Amsterdam on 23 August 1608. By spring 1603 Helwys was both of an age and status to move in circles in which such a remark might have been made privately; Murton was not. The book was not completed till 1615 since it refers at the end to 'our confession in print published four years ago', but it is still highly probable that Helwys wrote it.³

John Wilkinson, leader of a group of Seekers in Colchester, then imprisoned there, referred to Murton in 1613 as then 'prisoner at London', and to 'others of his company and followers'.⁴ Helwys was certainly still alive, though he may have been ill, and was certainly dead by the end of 1615.⁵ Therefore, Murton was known as a leader before Helwys ceased writing.

¹ Pollard, S.T.C. gives 563.5 and 563.7 as 1620 and 1621 editions, each extant in only one copy in USA, neither currently on microfilm; apparently one of these was the work republished in 1662 as *A humble supplication to the King's Majesty* this is appended as pp49-75 to *Persecution for Religion Judged and Condemned*, (itself a retitled version of *Obiections: Answered by way of dialogue* (1615))

² Printed *Burroughes*, 215-6; Graunt, *Truth's Victory against heresy*, (1645, E277/7), 19

³ *Obiections*, 32, 79; Helwys authorship assumed in what follows, but it is not essential to the argument, which depends on showing a shift over time rather than between leaders.

⁴ Wilkinson, *Sealed Fountaine opened* (1646) title page, 1; preface claims it was written in 1613.

⁵ Helwys's uncle, Geoffrey Helwys died May 1616 leaving a bequest to Joan, Thomas's widow, Burgess, JSSB 278; but the grant of administration (PCC, 1615) suggests he did not die before late 1614 (M. Finch ed, *PCC Administrations*, BRS 83 (1967), 18); Robinson refers to Helwys as if alive, *ORC*, 41-2, 44.

This fits with what we know from Smyth and the Bromheads about the leadership structure of the church. Even in *Differences*, Smyth had attacked 'the fancy of one pastor in the church', stressing the equality between officers of 'several titles', and the 'several names of one and the same office'; the absence of rank from the Bromhead's account will be recalled; in 1611, Helwys reaffirmed 'there being one sort of rule for elders, therefore but one sort of elders'.⁶ Implicit in all this is the idea of collective leadership; it seems that all the confessions and declarations of faith of Smyth, Helwys and Murton have been attributed to them personally only by later historians. The letter usually known as 'Helwys's English letter' to the Waterlanders of 12 March 1610 was signed by Helwys, William Piggot, Thomas Seamer and John Murton. Two of the books commonly attributed to Helwys were collective statements. He did sign the preface to *A Short and Plaine Proof*, but this was in the nature of a personal appeal to Lady Isabel Bowes whom he had known before emigrating. His name does not appear on the title page, and the work contains several statements such as 'we are most unfit; but yet to shew ourselves faithful with that talent that God hath given us, we have through the grace of God taken in hand to do our best service unto the Lord herein'. It was really an appendix to the church's *A Declaration of Faith of English people remaining at Amsterdam*, a statement of collective belief.⁷

Probably in 1612, Thomas Helwys returned to England with Murton and the others. His property at Broxtowe had been confiscated, presumably because he had emigrated illegally, and was leased out by the Crown by 11 June 1610. Helwys took up residence in Spitalfields, north of London, and from here he addressed to James I *A Short Declaration of the Myserie of Iniquity*.⁸ To the King's copy he appended a remarkable MS message: 'Hear, O King, and despise not ye counsel of ye poor and let their complaints come before thee. The king is a mortal man, and not God, therefore hath no power over the immortal soules of his subjects to make laws for them, and to set spiritual Lords over them... O king, be not seduced by deceivers to sin so against God, who thou oughtest to obey.' Such rhetoric was not well calculated to incline the authorities to leniency. Robinson thought the author's 'natural confidence, which abounded in him', which had led him back to London 'under an appearance of spiritual courage', now led him also to 'think it his glory [to] dare and challenge king and state to their faces'.⁹ Helwys' famous book presaged a

⁶ Scheffer, *HFCM*, 190; *Smyth* 1, 307, 313-4, Helwys, 'Declaration', loc cit, 217

⁷ Helwys, *SPP*, sig A4; MS 1351 printed *Burragel*, 185-7.

⁸ *CSPD*, 1603-10, 617; *A Declaration of Faith*, printed Burgess *JSSB* 212-219, was referred to in *A Short and Plaine Proof* (preface), which perhaps came second, as a theological appendix to it; *The Advertisement* was probably next; it also (p5) cites *A Declaration*; these three are imprinted 1611 so all preceded *Myserie of Iniquity* (1612); this order was suggested by *Burragel*, 251-2

⁹ *Mystery*, MS remarks in Bodleian Library copy signed by Helwys; reproduced in facsimile in Whitley, *Thomas Helwys of Broxtowe Hall* (1936); Robinson, *ORC*, 41

difficult period for the Baptists; their choice of London might be sensible for a group seeking to lose itself in the crowds, but not for one determined to shout heretical views from the rooftops. By the time of its publication, indeed, it seems they were already in trouble.

Murton had been in Newgate in 1613, and it cannot be excluded that the leaders were held for many months and perhaps even years.¹⁰ The Humble Supplication of 1613/14 had complained of 'lingering imprisonments'. By 1620 they could recall 'imprisonments for many years in divers counties of England, in which many have died and left behind them widows, and many small children'; (though 'many years' may perhaps refer back to separatist days before the emigration). In 1626 two messengers to Amsterdam had proved themselves faithful 'by continually suffering a long and troublesome captivity almost to their whole ruin'. Such confinements may have come close to disabling the Baptists' prosyletising activities.¹¹ In 1614, Robinson asked them why they will not 'shake the dust off their feet against London which receives them not at all?' In 1612, Helwys had attacked those remaining in Holland as 'seducers'; amongst them were those (Baptists) who had 'learned by fear of men to flee from our own country... where you might best publish the gospel'. In 1615 too there were hard words for those remaining in exile, but the tone was different: 'any occasion, as fear of a little imprisonment or the like may excuse any both from the Lord's work and the help of their brethren that for want of their society and comfort are exceedingly weakened if not overcome', and it was now stressed what a 'great help and encouragement would be to God's people in affliction of imprisonment and the like, to have their brethrens presence'.¹²

2 The context of Baptist efforts in England

Archbishop Bancroft had enforced effectively a policy of subscription to the government of the church and to its articles. Whatever the wisdom of this policy, it was a defining experience for those who refused to comply. In the period 1604-08, many radical puritans could be persuaded that there was little future in the Church of England; Bancroft's policy appeared to destroy the prospect of further reformation and to substitute accommodation with the popish enemy. For those intransigent clergymen who were deprived, and who left for foreign shores, a separation in practice seemed almost to impose itself on conscientious resisters, and separatism in theory appeared to express the logic of their choice. John Robinson stands as an exemplar of this.

¹ Wilkinson, *Sealed Fountaine opened* (1646) E1205(2), preface; Graunt, *Truth's Victory* (1645, E277/7). 19; *Mistery* refers (56) to imprisonments but in such a way as to suggest it was before exile.

¹¹ *Persecution for Religion Judged*, 49; five churches to Ries, 12 November 1626: MS B 1372, Latin trans, *Burridge* 2, 233-9; English re-re-trans *EEB* 2, 26-30 from which here cited, 26

¹² Robinson, *ORC*, 96, 44, responding to Helwys's charge that Amsterdam and Leyden 'neither receive them nor the word they bring', *Mistery*, 210, 211; *Objections*, 78-9.

Yet in England, puritan clergymen prepared to swallow the unpalatable medicine of subscription found that the physicians of church and state would not impose upon them a strict ceremonial regimen. The Jacobean church offered little hope of great changes, but after the death of Bancroft, more scope for quiet enjoyment of the puritan religious style. In many parishes there flourished exercises, stipendiary lectureships, or lectures by combination. Offensive liturgical practices were often quietly omitted, in services dominated by the sermon, delivered by a minister who dressed plainly, in a building furnished in like manner. There were sympathetic bishops, such as Joseph Hall at Exeter, James Montague at Bath and Wells and Tobie Matthew at York. The system was underpinned intellectually by a Calvinist orthodoxy backed by its pre-eminent heads, King James and the new man at Canterbury, George Abbot.

A great book was written on the *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*. But a sequel based on the next reign could hardly progress much further than Patrick Collinson's own final chapter. By 1610, there was no 'movement', in the sense of a layer of persons, combined through linked activities in the pursuit of shared goals for reforming or superceding the established church. There was full conformity, and quietist partial conformity. The retreat of Jacobean puritanism involved more than pragmatic acceptance of the defeat of further reformation. Until 1618 at least, war with Catholic powers, which had for so long added patriotic fuel to Calvinistic rhetorical fire, was off the international agenda. Internally, meanwhile, the second reformation in England was over. After 1600 few new areas were brought within reach of those protestant evangelists, who in Elizabeth's reign had so often been puritan in style and conviction. Perhaps the evangelical fervour, which (with official encouragement) had sustained the preachers of (say) Sussex or Lancashire in the last quarter of the century had largely disappeared as an energising factor in most localities. The gospel was now chiefly for export, to Ireland or the new world. Jacobean puritans often referred nostalgically to the glorious days of Elizabethan material and spiritual struggle. The defeat of puritan ambitions seems to have been associated with the growth in the adoption of 'federal covenant theology', already visible in the 1590s, and preoccupation with 'practical divinity'. With partial conformity came also the need for circumspection, in not provoking authorities whose tacit acquiescence in it was essential. Jacobean puritanism was altogether more conservative than its predecessor.¹³

Puritans found much to criticise in the liturgy of the English church, and abuses such as pluralism. But most zealous laymen probably felt that things could be worse, and clergymen might detect some improvement in standards of their calling. Despite the relaxation of pressure

¹³ P. Collinson, *Godly People*; idem *Religion of Protestants*; K. Fincham, ed., *The Early Stuart Church*. idem, *Pastor as Prelate*; R. Manning, *Elizabethan Sussex*, Richardson, *Puritanism in North West England*

after Bancroft conditions were less promising for separatist agitation. Some, most notably William Bradshaw, retreated towards partial conformity.¹⁴ Early rigorists such as Sabine Staesmore found the ground less stony in Amsterdam. Even there, in 1615 and 1621 two groups of repentant Separatists 'came humbly to the [English Reformed] church'; 'few Englishmen were dropping away to Separatism and some of those already in Separatism were won back.'¹⁵ Undoubtedly there were separatists. In Kent, for example, there were some beginnings during the period after 1604, but little in the way of separatist organisation seems to have come to light until the prosecutions of John Turner and others from 1625. John Ellis and Richard Masterson from Sandwich, who had openly separated from the parish church and gathered a small group by 1615, were members with Robinson in Leyden.¹⁶ In 1616, Henry Jacob returned from exile and founded a gathered congregation which did not break decisively from the established church. In the absence of any national movement for reform, this strategy made good sense: he and his colleagues were able to maintain contact with respectable puritans in the parishes, who, though uncomfortable with much in the Church of England, were unwilling to set off into a separatist oblivion. Thus, Jacob's group was able to make new friends, to replenish its numbers, and to survive the age of conformity, until the wheel turned again with the coming of Laud. In the thirties, there emerged from his rapidly growing church a succession of separatist groups. Meanwhile, the Baptists were seeking to survive and spread their ideas by different means.

Thomas Helwys and John Murton had broken with the church of England as separatists, and then later broken with the separatists themselves. For them, the official church was not only a false church but a limb of antichrist. Their understanding of theology distinguished them sharply from the puritan mainstream, and even from semi-separatists and separatists. A bitter, ingrained, and unyielding hostility to all forms of communion with members of the official church, encouraged them to make a virtue of the apparent necessity of a friendless isolation.

3 Baptists and the Calvinist mainstream

By 1611, Thomas Helwys and John Smyth had diverged on questions of ecclesiology, Smyth moving to anabaptist positions, Helwys to a sharp separation between the spiritual and civil functions of state power. They also diverged theologically; Helwys reverted to positions in some

¹⁴ M Tolmie, *Triumph of the Saints*, chapter 1; S.Brachlow, 'The Elizabethan Roots of Henry Jacob's Churchmanship', *JEccH*, 36 (1985), 228-54

¹⁵ R.Acheson, 'The Development of religious separation...', 50-4, idem 'Sion's Saint: John Turner...', *Arch Cant* 99 (1984), 183-97; Sprunger *DP*, 89, 99; A.Everitt, *The Community of Kent*, eg 53, 59-60.

¹⁶ For Bradshaw, S. Clarke, *A General Martyrologie* (1677); R.Acheson 'The Development of religious separatism ...', Thesis (1983), 37-8

respects similar to Arminianism, but Smyth adhered in the last years of his life to recognisably Mennonite positions. Later, Murton slightly modified Helwys's views in this direction.

Of course, there were areas of agreement between the three Baptist leaders. All operated with schemes which emphasised God's unbounded power; all rejected the five heads of the TULIP.¹⁷ Smyth stressed that 'God before the foundation of the world did foresee and determine the issue and event of all his works', whilst insisting that he 'doth not create or predestinate any man to destruction';¹⁸ on the contrary, God 'created Adam for salvation, and all his descendants'; 'none of the descendants of Adam is born in sin or guilt'.¹⁹ For Smyth 'there is no original sin, but all sin is actual and voluntary' God 'imposes no necessity of sinning on any one' but men choose this course 'freely by Satanic instigation'. These positions might have been used to lay the basis for conceptions of foreseen faith, but Smyth did not do so, since faith 'a knowledge in the mind of the doctrine of the law and the gospel contained in it', played a subordinate role in his understanding of the process of salvation.²⁰ Men have 'the power to reject or accept offered grace', 'to embrace prevenient grace'.²¹ Consistent with this stress upon man's freedom of will was the idea that justification comprised only partly 'the imputation of the righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith, and partly of inherent righteousness, in the Holy themselves, by the operation of the Holy spirit'; this second part was 'called regeneration or sanctification'. The categories of justification and sanctification (distinct in Calvinism) here collapse into each other, and works eclipse faith: 'anyone is righteous who doeth righteousness'.²²

Now Helwys broadly agreed with these positions; he relied heavily on the trained scholar Smyth, especially in the early *Synopsis Fidei*.²³ He argued that 'the Lord creates no man to damnation but that man bring it upon themselves by their own sins', and that he 'would have all men saved'. He opposed the doctrine of election of particular individuals, worrying that it would lead men either to despair or complacency depending on whether they thought they were one of this number.²⁴ He followed Smyth in rejecting the position of most Calvinists (even Arminians) in

¹⁷ Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible grace, Perseverance of the saints; canons imposed at Dort, 1619..

¹⁸ 'Propositions and conclusions', Burgess, *JSSB*, 241-57, #9, #25.

¹⁹ 'Defence of De Ries's confession', translated from the Latin version in *Smyth* 2, 685-700 and printed, Coggins, *JSC*, 172-94 at 172, 179

²⁰ Smyth, 'Personal confession of Faith', Burgess, *JSSB*, 200-01; 'Propositions..' #68 *ibid* 252

²¹ 'Defence of De Ries's confession', Coggins *JSC*, 175, 177; Smyth became uncomfortable even with the concept, urging that 'Whoever is in Christ and perseveres is the elect' – the 'universal benefit' enabling the choice of grace 'cannot be called, and (in my opinion) is not called, election in the sacred books' *ibid* 180, 181; not faith but 'the baptism of Christ' or 'the new creation is the spring of justification', *ibid* 185

²² Smyth, 'Personal confession of faith', *loc cit*, #10.

²³ This relies heavily on Coggins, *JSC*, 135-6 and his citations from a translation unavailable to me, from which it appears that Helwys at first expressed views indistinguishable from those of Smyth.

²⁴ *Declaration of Faith*, quoted Burgess, *JSSB*, 206; 'Declaration' #5, *ibid*, 213; Helwys *SPP*, B2

explicitly affirming that ‘men may fall away from the grace of God and from the truth which they have received’ and this not only temporarily: ‘a righteous man may forsake his righteousness and perish’. ‘Let all men have assurance that if they continue unto the end they shall be saved’, not a form of assurance ordinarily recognised by the Calvinists of the day.²⁵ But Helwys also denied ‘that most damnable heresy’ of free will. For him, unlike Smyth, man is not free to choose good; though he may reject grace. In *Synopsis Fidei*, Helwys had rejected original sin (‘there is no sin through our parents through generation’). After this he affirmed its existence: on Adam’s fall, ‘his sin being imputed to all; and so death went over all men’, but would not speculate about its original cause.²⁶ He used the concept, widespread amongst Arminians, of foreseen faith: ‘God, before the foundation of the world, hath predestinated all that believe in him shall be saved, and all that believe not shall be damned, all which he knew before’. Helwys thought that ‘man is justified only by the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith’; here Smyth’s ‘inherent righteousness, in the holy themselves’ does not feature, and though ‘faith without works is dead’, works play a lesser role than for his former colleague.²⁷

It appears that later, Helwys retreated towards Arminian-Calvinist terrain. True, he thanked the Mennonites for ‘discovering our errors’ to us, which suggests they influenced his thinking in the area of theology (for what other area could he have meant?). But on the other hand, he also celebrated the fact that ‘the truth... doth daily break forth and increase in these parts and that amongst them which your selves account the best reformed churches’; “these parts” were then Holland, and this must surely refer to the Remonstrants.²⁸ Helwys, whose *Advertisement* in any case reveals him to be much animated by socio-political considerations, was clearly trying to define his own somewhat uncertain theological views. He may have been influenced by factional considerations in moving back towards Arminianism, but he never retreated to what was still thought of as orthodox ‘Calvinism’ by puritans of the English Church.

Indeed Helwys was very hostile to the official church, and even to ‘the much applauded profession of puritanism’ and its ‘false prophets’, who, after all, merely sought to throw a Christian cloak over the limbs of antichrist. Their ordination involved ‘capping and curtseying’ and ‘prostrating yourselves on your knees before the Archbishop or bishop’: their preachers ‘stand in the market place to be hired from the East to the west, and to be transported from North to South, where soever you can get a good town pulpit or a privileged chapel a great chamber or

²⁵ ‘Declaration’, Burgess, *JSSB* 212-19 at 213-14

²⁶ Helwys, *Advertisement*, 91-2, idem *SPP* sig B5, A4; ‘Declaration’, Burgess, *JSSB*, 212-3, #4; ‘Synopsis Fidei’, #4, quoted Coggins, *JSC*, 136

²⁷ ‘Declaration’, #5 ibid 213.

²⁸ Helwys, *Advertisement*, 5; idem *SPP*, preface

dining parlour to administer in, how prophane soever the town or household be'; all in all 'you trample underfoot the testament which Christ hath purchased with his blood'. Such statements were unlikely to win friends and influence amongst radicals in the Church of England. Indeed Helwys did not have much time even for the separatists, whose preachers 'are false prophets, because they are elected and ordained to their office by a congregation of infidels or unbelievers that are not joined to Christ, and have not put on Christ by baptism'.²⁹

John Murton's *A Description* (1620) did not equal Helwys's violence against the puritans. But he actually extended the rhetorical sharpness of his predecessor to 'Calvinism' and to 'predestination', identified as standpoints to be opposed *tout court*. 'The chief maintainers of this predestination (as we see by experience) are the Calvinists, or Puritans as they are called', who argue that 'men cannot choose but do what wickedness and mischief they do'. Here he followed Smyth's rejection of 'your reformed predestination', 'your reformed eternal election of the damned' the views of 'these our predestinarians'³⁰. Murton agreed with Helwys in much; both rejected perseverance: 'A Man having true grace may fall away, even as Esau lost his earthly inheritance which he had right unto; so may the Saints loose their heavenly inheritance which they have right unto.' Thus far Murton was at one with Helwys. But he laid greater stress on freedom of the will, holding 'that there is left in man the faculty of will, to choose or refuse', and not merely to resist grace; 'what can be more plain that man hath Free choyce to work with God, or against God, in the work of his grace'. He referred scathingly to 'the opinion of the Calvinists, that man lyeth so bound in the cords of sin that he can do nothing whithout the compelling grace of God'. In this, he resembled Smyth, but Murton adduced some very non-anabaptistical arguments for it. Free will applied in both civil and religious matters: 'if thou will obey thy superiors, thou shalt be rewarded; if thou commit treason thou shalt be hanged'. Just as civil laws were enacted to persuade men 'to embrace the good and eschew the evil', so God threatens us: 'If ye do not repent ye shall perish'.³¹

The anti-clericalist and anti-intellectualist tendency of Helwys's views fitted well with disdain of intellectual discussion with university-trained preachers, and their friends amongst the social cream of the parishes. They set a course for proselytising in humbler circles. Helwys reaffirmed the traditional stress on spiritual experience: 'the most simplest soul that seeks the truth in sincerity may attain unto the knowledge of salvation contained in the Word of God.' The corollary of these views was the undiminished belief that unordained persons might both preach and baptise. For Helwys, 'any disciple of Christ in what part of the world soever coming to the

²⁹ *Mistery*, 86, 91, 98, 93; on separatists, *ibid* 123-56, quoted at 126

³⁰ Murton, *Description*, sig A4; Defence of De Ries's confession, Coggins, *JSC*, 178, 180, 179

³¹ Murton, *Description*, 106, 79, 95, 104, 97-8

Lord's way, he by the word and spirit of god preaching that way unto others, and converting he may and ought also to baptize them'. Murton used similar words: 'Christ commandeth every disciple to the end of the world; to go teach, make disciples... whosoever therefore may make a disciple, he may baptise by Christ's commandment'. However, it is interesting that Murton also seems to restrict baptising to members who had been set aside as preachers because of their gifts: 'every disciple that hath ability is authorised, yea commanded to preach, convert and baptise, as well and as much (if not more) then a pastor' (my emphasis).³² Perhaps this had also been the intention of Helwys, but his categorical formulation, and broader lay tradition suggests otherwise. There may be one final difference. Whereas Helwys's true church was to be 'knit unto the Lord and one another by Baptism upon their own confession of the faith', the covenant seems to be missing from Murton's statements on the church. Noting this, Burrage commented that whilst Murton's people might have used 'some simple covenant formula' they 'must have laid very little emphasis upon it. With them, baptism had evidently taken the place of the church covenant.'³³

4 Helwys and Murton on the state

Thomas Helwys had much in common with zealous and patriotic puritans of his class, and his social and political conceptions are much more readily evident than those of John Smyth. It is extremely striking that, with the exception of Christology - in which the Mennonites neither forbade nor insisted upon what Helwys considered to be heresies - his differences with them have politics, not theology, at their heart. In "Synopsis Fidei" he set out unchanged Smyth's *CB* position, that the Sabbath should be observed in order 'that we might be better enabled to the aforesaid [religious] duties we ought to separate ourselves from the labours of our callings which might hinder us thereto'.³⁴ But in the later *Declaration*, he substituted a very different argument. On the sabbath the saints ought 'not to labour in their callings, according to the equity of the moral law, which Christ came not to abolish but to fulfill'.³⁵ Here, he was deliberately disowning Smyth's assertion that the laws of the Old Testament were 'types and shadows' abolished by Christ's coming.³⁶ Scandalised by Mennonite laxity, Helwys abandoned this permissive formulation, and substituted his own argument. It reflects the outlook of the puritan country gentleman, whose piety ideally represents the spirit of the conscientious justice of the peace.

³² *Advertisement*, 23-4; *Objections...*, 65; Murton, *Description*, 163

³³ *Declaration* #11, Burgess, *JSSB*, 215; *Burrage* 1, 261

³⁴ For christology, Helwys, *Advertisement...*, 8-16, 36-7; MS 1350, Helwys "Synopsis Fidei", cited *Burrage* 1, 183-4; *Smyth* 2 *CB*, 571-2,

³⁵ Helwys, 'Declaration' #19, Burgess, *JSSB* 212-9.

³⁶ 'Declaration', 216 (Burgess made this point, *ibid* n3); *Smyth* 2, *CB*, 571

Sunday observation does not flow from the immediate needs of religious observance, to be determined at the discretion of the church, but by God's immutable law.

Thus, his rhetorical outrage: 'What a doctrine of devils is this that any should be denied to be members of the body of Christ, for executing an holy office appointed of God.' The denial to magistrates of membership of the visible church tends to makes them both 'unworthy of salutation' on the grounds that they are also unlikely to go to heaven. Worldly superiority was no bar to the kingdom of heaven or to the church on earth; magistrates should 'punish evil doers by the sword' 'defend their countries and people', who 'being commanded by the magistrates, go to war'. It was wrong that magistrates, 'for the cause of god and your safeties and preservations should be forced to hire men to fight for you (though you pay for it).' These views led to 'damnable heresies', 'encouraging men to 'despise government and speak evil of those that are in dignity'; this was dangerous, for 'if the sword of justice were taken away, all government were overthrown'³⁷ Now by autumn 1609, Smyth thought 'there may be many questions be made' of converted magistrates but that God 'doubt not would direct us to the truth'; by early 1610 he reached Mennonite positions: 'if the magistrate will follow Christ, and be his disciple, he must deny himself ... he must love his enemies and not kill them, he must pray for them and not punish them... not imprison them, banish them, dismember them, and spoil their goods'; he could not 'retain the revenge of the sword'.³⁸ Given Helwys social status and legal training; it is hardly surprising that he rejected views which might threaten magistracy, government and 'those in dignity'. It is interesting that both the other two members of the Smyth/Helwys group known to have been of gentry status, Gervase Neville and Ursula Bywater, both jibbed at Smyth's course.

Helwys set out the core of his position in *A Declaration of Faith*: 'Magistrates are the ministers of God for our wealth. They bear not the sword for nought. They are the ministers of God to take vengeance of them that do evil.... it is a fearful sin to speak evil of them that are in dignity and to despise government... We ought to pray for tribute, custom and all other duties... they may be the members of the "Church of Christ" retaining their magistracy..'.³⁹ On return to England, Helyws maintained this patriotic stance: 'all his majesty's faithful subjects should protest their faithful allegiance to his majesty's person crown and dignity'. He affirming that 'the king have power to take our sons and daughters to do all his services of war and of peace', but at the same time attacked 'that great hierarchy of Archbishops and Lord Bishops' and 'that power,

³⁷ Helwys, *Advertisement*, 58, 60, 75-78

³⁸ Smyth2, CB, 572; 'Propositions and Conclusions' printed Burgess, JSSB, 241-57 at 255

³⁹ Bywater did not sign the 1610 application, but joined the Waterlanders after remarriage (Nov 1615) to Alexander Hodgkin (*Burroughes*2, 178, 200; Scheffer, *HFC* 196). Neville was reported in 1611 to have now returned beyond his vomit, exclaiming against your succession, and strives to build up the succession of Rome' (Helwys, *Advertisement* 36, 73); Burgess, JSSB, 212-19, #24

that pomp, that cruelty, those canons and courts' of which they disposed. He asked if the King would appoint to such positions 'against the whole rule of God'. Drawing on the old tradition of erastian Protestantism, he urged James I to abolish the spiritual lords and confiscate their material wealth: this would 'enrich the whole land without measure, and that in disburdening the land of all those courts .. the taxations, fees and penalties thereof are without number'. The King would no longer need taxes and subsidies: 'Oh what a ready consent would there be in the king's people to these things'.⁴⁰ Helwys also appealed to the law, and to conceptions of common right often used by puritan common lawyers: 'Princes must afford all their subjects justice and equity, although they be as heathens and publicans.' He addressed the bishops 'Do not when a poor soul by violence is brought before you... first implore the oath ex officio. Oh most wicked course.' The high commission, 'so far as it is over church matters, is most unlawful' because such matters are for Christ. He complained against the bishops' use of their power to deprive ministers and impose their own choice against the will of the congregation. In *Objections*, there are several references to the King's speeches in Parliament in which he spoke against undue severity in matters of religion and the oath of allegiance.⁴¹

Helwys's recourse to erastian traditions of respect for the civil magistracy and loathing of his ecclesiastical counterpart is evident in matters which could be seen as civil: if Christ himself 'were upon earth in the flesh... he would not meddle with anything that belonged to the King', and would not even 'judge the woman taken in adultery'. Such breaches were properly civil, but when committed by church members they could also attract spiritual sanctions. Thus, the enforcement of the sabbath was a matter of God's law for the saints, whose church would enforce it, but also a public order problem amongst the reprobate, which called for magistratical activity. These positions are consistent with the sense that the business of the magistrate is not so much to act as a nursing father to the church, in the old separatist sense, as to act in the public interest conceived in essentially secular terms. Indeed, part of the reason why the authorities should grant toleration, said Helwys, was the commercial benefit which accompanied it, as exemplified in the prosperity and strength of the Dutch Republic. It was from this approach that Helwys derived his commitment to a complete religious toleration whose conclusion has so often been quoted:

'We still pray our Lord the king that we may be free from suspect for having any thoughts of provoking evil against them of the Romish religion in regard of their profession, if they be true and faithful to the King, for ... our Lord the King have no more power over their consciences than over ours... if the King's people be obedient and true subjects, obeying all

⁴⁰ *Objections*, 14; *Mistery*, 16, 39-40, 82, 21-22, 49, 71

⁴¹ *Objections*, 16; *Mistery*, 29, 60; *Objections*, 34, 37-42, 4.

human laws made by the king, our lord the king can require no more: for men's religion to God is betwixt God and themselves; the king shall not answer for it, neither may the king be judged between God and Man. Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews, or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.'

The loss to earthly power, however, was heaven's gain, for Helwys thought that all those who believed, or even acquiesced, in infant baptism could expect eternal damnation: 'if you had no other sin amongst you all, but this, you perish every man'.⁴² It might therefore be suggested that Helwys's opposition to punishment in this world was predicated upon his enthusiasm for the draconian measures expected in the next. Nevertheless the genuineness of his commitment to religious toleration by states cannot be doubted, for it flowed from all his other positions. His synthesis incorporated a highly developed sense of the sovereignty of the individual conscience: 'men should choose their religion themselves, seeing only they must stand themselves before the judgement seat of God to answer for themselves, when it shall be no excuse for them to say, we were commanded or compelled to be of this religion by the king.' Helwys and Smyth had originally developed a radical distinction between private religion and public politics partly because of their stress upon the interior or spiritual aspect of religious experience and against observances felt to be spiritually dead. Rebaptism must also have helped to destroy the old Puritan sense, which the separatists also shared, that the English Protestant Church and the magistrates which guarded it, however unsatisfactory, were allies against the counterreformation. Helwys knew that the magistrates had defended the Dutch Mennonite church as one of the churches lying within the civil jurisdiction of the Dutch state; but he also knew they had not, thus far, defended the state in order to impose confessional orthodoxy. Now, on his return to England probably in late 1611, he may have drawn the conclusion that in so far as the English authorities defended the civil rights of Catholics and other dissentients in the same way, they too could win great victories against external threats.

Helwys noted that Roman Catholics have 'found much more favour' with 'the Hierarchy' than zealous reformers though the 'good carriage towards them we disapprove not nor envy not'. Now in 1613/14, the 'Humble Supplication' appealed against this to erastian principles: 'the popish recusants upon taking the oath are delivered from imprisonment, and divers of us also are set at liberty, when we fall under the hands of the reverend judges and justices. But when we fall in the hands of the bishops we can have no benefit by the said oath, for they say it belongeth only to popish recusants, and not to others, but kept have we been by them many years in lingering

⁴² *Mistery*, 41, 69; quoted *Burridge* 1, 253.

imprisonment'.⁴³ In 1615 they suggested that the King and his ministers should ask themselves 'not whether they please the lord bishops, but whether they please the Lord Jesus Christ' by persecuting for religion. But in 1620 they openly accuse not just the church courts but the civil magistracy as acting to enforce conformity: the bishops 'for our not submitting herein, procure your **temporal** sword to persecute us, by casting us in prisons' etc (my emphasis). A more quietist tone is also evident in their prayers, 'for Kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and a peacable life, in all godliness and honesty'.⁴⁴ Now it seems unlikely that this reflected any shift in public policy. Probably there were zealous puritan magistrates who remained sympathetic; others acted to bolster prelatical authority by helping to enforce church attendance against 'Brownists', and so on. It seems therefore, that the slight shift here visible is in the outlook of the baptists themselves, brought about by the rigours of their experience in England over the previous five years. Perhaps their long isolation from the puritan mainstream resulted in the estrangement from potential supporters amongst people of some means, who had much to lose by persecution. The doctrinal changes earlier evidenced seem to be related to this change in tone. It is important to emphasise that John Murton did not make any fundamental changes to the general approach of Thomas Helwys to the state: in arguing for free will in both spiritual and civil affairs, for example, he stressed that chaos would result if civil laws broke down.⁴⁵ Still, in their attitude to the civil state, the Baptists may have shifted slightly in the direction of the more Anabaptistical approach practiced by the Smyth group in Holland.

5 Baptists in the localities

The compensations of life within the Anglican church did not silence more militant critics. But who could organise them? Here the very decisiveness of the Baptists' rejection of the official church as a false church, a view exhaustively discussed in the works of Smyth, Helwys and Murton, spelt out what timid would-be separatists felt in their hearts. Nothing is known about the baptists in 'divers counties' to whom they referred in 1620. But it seems from two letters of November 1626, that there were then congregations in Tiverton, Coventry, Salisbury, London and Lincolnshire which counted about 150 members,⁴⁶ and it seems that they may also have had

⁴³ *Mistery*, 29 'A most Humble supplication of divers poor prisoners' to 'the Commons House of Parliament', printed *Burridge* 2 215-6

⁴⁴ *Objections*, preface unpag.; *Persecution for Religion Judged*, 63, 49.

⁴⁵ Murton, *Description*, 95-6

⁴⁶ Five churches to Ries, 12 November 1626, trans *EEB* 2, 26-27; Anslo to Ries, 13 Nov 1626, *ibid* 24-5 gives 'undoubtedly 150 persons'

contacts elsewhere.⁴⁷ In this apparently patternless list were urban and rural locations, and areas of greater or lesser puritan strength. Estimating the comparative strength of these different centres is largely a matter of guesswork. Nothing is known about the Coventry church; the Salisbury group appear to have been very small, Tiverton perhaps a little larger. In 1630, three people (Abraham Cade, his wife and Joan Slowe) were presented as anabaptists in Salisbury and they were joined by two more (Isaac Sloe and his wife) in 1632.⁴⁸ In Tiverton, James Toppe was named as an anabaptist with his wife Israel, a fuller John Skibbowe, Richard and Charity Berrfy, John Tucker, Israel Cockram and five others.⁴⁹ The London and Lincoln congregations were probably much the largest. Elias Tookey complained that he and fifteen colleagues had been expelled by the London church under John Murton, and since such matters were effected by vote, this may suggest the original organisation numbered perhaps forty, or more.⁵⁰

In Lincolnshire, presentments for 'anabaptism' began in 1616 and continued through very many episcopal and archdiaconal visitations for the next 25 years. Many of those cited, including the earliest, Richard Lolly [Dolby?]('it is reported of him that he is rebaptised'), in November 1616, were resident in the city of Lincoln. He was an apprentice of William Bristowe, who had a second apprentice ~~of Bristow~~, Thomas Lawton, named as an Anabaptist two years later.⁵¹ Many presentments for anabaptism were from St Swithin's parish. Outside the city, by 1623, there were baptists to be found in the parish of Messingham; Plumb also reports scattered presentments at Ouston, Belton, Eagle and Grimondby in 1635-8. In 1631 eight persons were named as anabaptists at Scotter and in 1640 this figure had risen to eleven.⁵²

Robinson had asked of Helwys and his group 'why go not they home every one to his friends... but abide in London where fewest of their friends are'? There are indications that some did later return to the county of their origin. We know the names of most of John Smyth's group, but only from applications to the Waterlanders – after the split with Helwys and his friends. Of

⁴⁷ In *Anabaptism's History of Iniquity Unmasked* (I.P) (1623) probably by John Paget (*Burrage* 1 265), is printed a letter dated 10 May 1622 from a Baptist to six friends including Samuel Quash (*Burrage* 2, 219-22) It is uncertain whether the signature is HH (Henoch Howet?) or HN for Henry Niclaes, a pseudonym perhaps adopted by Edward Jessop. A Samuel Quash married Elizabeth Croker, 4 June 1633 at Exeter.

⁴⁸ W. Burgess, 'Salisbury and Tiverton about 1630' *TBHS* 3 (1912), 1-7

⁴⁹ Burgess, 'James Toppe and the Tiverton Anabaptists', *TBHS* 3 (1913), 193-211; idem, 'The Tiverton Anabaptists', *TBHS* 4 (1914), 124-6

⁵⁰ *Persecution for Religion Judged*, 49; MS B 1367, Ries to Tookey, May 1624: Dutch orig in *Burrage* 2, 222-9, trans *EEB* 2, 32-37, from here cited at 32.

⁵¹ L.A.O., Lincoln Archdeaconry, Vj 17 (1616) 165r, Episcopal, Vj 24 (1918), f71; R. Kershaw, 'Baptised Believers: Lincolnshire Baptists1600-1700' (Nottingham MA, 1996) mentions Lawton, 8,13; also in 1616 a Robert Godferey of Wrawby was presented as an anabaptist, *ibid* f 23v; he appears in J. Plumb 'Nonconformity in Lincs', Sheffield MA (1940), vol 2, 18

⁵² L.A.O, Stowe Archdeaconry, Vjij/1 (1623), f 71r, Plumb, NL, vol 2, 23-4; Stowe Archdeaconry, Vjij/2 (1631) ff4r,7r, Stowe [metropolitan visit], Vj 31 (1640), ff 51v ,66v

the latter we know only those three people who in March 1610 signed with him the letter to the Dutch: these were Murton, William Piggott and Thomas Seamer. The signatory Seamer had probably joined John Smyth at Gainsborough, for a man of his names married there in 1592, baptising several children in the parish by 1606. Murton also lived in the town. On 3 Feb 1631, a Thomas Seamer of Gainsborough and seven others were charged with standing excommunicate.⁵³ If Seamer was a link with the past it may be that William Lupton and Elizabeth Lupton provide connections to the future: on 27 April 1625 he was charged 'for not coming to the church to hear divine service being an absolute anabaptist', and ten years later, in December 1635 she too was named 'for an anabaptist' at Coningsby. The appearance of these names is of particular interest given the importance of Luptons in Lincolnshire Baptist history from the 1650s.⁵⁴

In London, or in other areas where puritanism was strong, the arguments for staying in the established church may also have appeared strong. But in darker corners of the land, the achievements of the Jacobean broad church were less impressive and solace in godly company harder to find; in counties such as Lincolnshire, the balance sheet could appear rather different. This may help to explain the remarkable case of Peter Finch. In July 1623 Nicholas Cawton deposed 'that his children have been taught to read the gospel by Finch, who is an Anabaptist, for the space of these two years last'; Martin Gateworth also had 'a little child which learned the horne book with Finch'; even 'Mr Ward maior hath a daughter that goes to school with Dr Finch being (at present) an anabaptist'!! Several errant parents signed a declaration that 'we have done amiss in communicating with Peter Finch and especially in sending our children to be taught by him being excommunicate and an Anabaptist and so publicly declared. And we do promise to avoid all conversation with him as much as possibly lieth in our power, and all other of that heresy'.⁵⁵ Richard Bell, one of the signatories, was not as contrite as this may suggest; in 1629 he would have "overthrowne the court meaning the ecclesiastical court and that anabaptists may teach scolle whether the court will or not" Finch's school-mastering days may have come to an end, but he was presented with other Baptists as late as 1638.⁵⁶

It is clear that the Baptists had acquired an audience in Lincoln, which included some influential people. Thomas Johnson a baker, was 'presented at evry recorded ecclesiastical visitation between 1623 and 1638'; he was wealthy, with a second house in London, and was

⁵³ Robinson, *ORC*, 44; L.A.O. Stowe Archdeaconry, Viiij/2, (1631), ff 5r, 12v; Foster, *Gainsborough Parish Registers*, 33,34,36,39,44,46,50,122

⁵⁴ L.A.O., Lincoln Episc, Vj 26 (1625), f 39; Lincoln Episc., Vj28 (1635), f44; John Lupton subscribed *The Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations* (1651) for Tattershall, sigs in Betteridge, 'Early Baptists' *BQ* 25 (1974), 273; *Fenstanton*, 60-1,142-3; D. Lupton, *The Tythe Takers Cart Overthrown* (1652) E1380(4)

⁵⁵ Lincoln Archdeaconry Vj 18 (1623) ff 7-9, 18; Kershaw, BBLB 8; Plumb prints declaration as appendix.

⁵⁶ Quoted, Kershaw, BBLB 10; Lincoln Archdeaconry, Vj 21 (1638) f 16.



named by Laud's vicar general as the leading figure amongst the Lincolnshire Baptists; Johnson's wife Ruth was presented for absence from church as early as 1616. Kershaw found seven wills of Lincoln Baptists proved by 1640, (a weaver, a brewer, a tailor, and a musician amongst them); one was the city alderman, property owner and gentleman Stephen Mason. This success of the Baptists was untypical. But it seems that here at least, they may have acted as substitute puritans, providing religious exercises of an acceptable style, and basic education (the 'horne book' suggests young children), to people who could not get them from the official church (this in turn would suggest that 'official' Puritanism was moribund). But it is also clear they had made serious converts. Bell stated in his will that 'I do believe that God hath ordained before the foundation of the world that they that will believe in Jesus Christ and doers of the same word that is written shall be saved', which reflects John Murton's position in *A Description*.⁵⁷ The earliest leader of the Baptists, Murton, a farrier of Gainsborough, might have had influence in this their stronghold, and his county, of Lincolnshire. But he seems to have remained in the capital. Imprisoned in Newgate in 1613, about ten years later he was leading a congregation in London, which met south of the river. In January 1645, Daniel Featley, rector of St Mary, Lambeth, referred to the 'Anabaptist serpent', who had 'thrust out his sting near the place of my residence, for more than twenty years'. Featley was inducted to the rectory on 5 February 1619, but married in 1622 and then lived (secretly) at his wife's house in Kennington Lane.⁵⁸

On 29 March 1624, one Elias Tookey and fifteen others wrote to the Waterlander elder Hans de Ries; having 'used many means to remain in the unity' with Murton's organisation, they had been expelled by it. By May there had been discussions in Holland between Ries and 'messengers' of the Tookey group; Ries asked Tookey for more details of his group's views, warned him not to create a new church and promised to mediate if both parties actively wished it. According to Ries, the breach had originated in the Tookey group's desire for toleration of 'the weak, or those of little understanding about scriptural matters' and he reported having discussed the nature of Christ's flesh and his deity with Tookey's colleagues. On 3 June Tookey wrote 'some remain in our congregation... who know not yet what they should think of Christ's deity' though no one actually denied it. Such issues may have caused the split. The following month, Tookey wanted both to affiliate to the Waterlanders, and to heal the breach with Murton: 'if you may receive us in your communion, it may please you to write a few words to John Morton and

⁵⁷ Kershaw, BBLB 8-10, 13; Laud, *Works* (1853), V, part ii, 326; for Ruth Johnson, Lincoln Archdeaconry, Vj 17 (1616), f 170 r and later visitations *passim*.

⁵⁸ *The Dippers dipt...* [1645, E268(11), sig B4v; *DNB*, sub Featley

his friends in order to augment peace and welfare'.⁵⁹ The Waterlanders, of course, tolerated a range of Christological views, but they drew the line at socinianism (or tried to); the Tookey group's permissive attitude on this, their celebration of communion by a private member in the absence of an ordained minister, and their attitudes to the oath and the magistracy, were all unacceptable; there was some agreement on Christology, but at the close of a further exchange of letters in December 1625, the other issues remained unresolved and affiliation was refused.⁶⁰

Anslo reported on 13 Nov 1626 that two 'commissioners' of the five English churches had arrived in Amsterdam with a letter for Ries.⁶¹ Now in his first letter of May 1624 Ries had made remarks which suggest that neither John Murton nor his colleagues had yet been in touch.⁶² Burrage thought this new approach might have been triggered by the death of Murton, but there can have been no theoretical objection to the ordination of successors by the English elders; if there was a shortage of leaders, this was a practical problem with which the Dutch could not help. The five churches did indeed write that 'the most principal ones amongst us are now dead', but it was despite this and not because of it, that they wanted to resume earlier negotiations (of which we have no direct knowledge): 'Formerly we were very much inclined, very desirous, to conclude the peace and unity between us; and though the most principal amongst us are now dead... we that remain are full of the same desire... and therefore we resume the same attempts.'⁶³

Before Murton's death, therefore, there had been amongst the English a change of heart and mind, in wishing to be reconciled with the Waterlander organisation which now sheltered the countrymen they had expelled in 1610. Even before the other churches made contact with Holland, there were amongst the members of Murton's congregation, two persons '(that were at his side), who have paid attention to the personal succession from the time of the apostles' and who wondered whether the Waterlanders 'can say that they have their origin from the times of the apostles'. The odd phrasing seems to suggest that the two were people of influence in the London congregation. Had it discussed whether to recommend to the other churches affiliation on just such a basis as Smyth had sought fifteen years earlier?⁶⁴ Anyway the raising of the succession

⁵⁹ *Burrage1*, 258; Ries to Tookey, May 1624, *EEB2*, 32-37: Tookey told the Dutch of expulsion 29 March, *ibid* 32, 33; messengers, *ibid* 36; Tookey to Ries 3 June: Dutch in *Burrage2*, 229-33; trans *EEB2*, 21-4.

⁶⁰ Ries, Wybrantz to Tookey, MS 1369 printed in Dutch *TBHS* 4, (1915) 229-31; Tookey to Ries, 17 March 1625 trans *EEB2*, 37-40; Ries to Tookey, 3 Dec 1625, MS 1371 printed in Dutch, *TBHS* 4, (1915), 231-50.

⁶¹ Anslo to Ries, 13 Nov 1626, MS B 1373, Dutch in *Burrage2*, 239-41; trans *EEB2*, 24-5. The Amsterdam elder Anslo reported that his visitors had arrived with a letter in English, which was translated into Latin by one of the English Waterlanders. This is MS B 1372, printed *Burrage2*, 233-9. On 18 Nov this was re-translated into Dutch (*Burrage2*, 239); the version in *EEB2*, 26-30 is a re-re-translation into English of this.

⁶² Ries to Tookey, May 1624, *EEB2*, 32-37: references scattered throughout this letter.

⁶³ *Burrage1* 272; five churches to Ries, 12 November 1626, *EEB2*, 26-30 at 26

⁶⁴ The English, however, still disagreed with their countrymen in Amsterdam over flight from persecution: 'Whether they would receive the English is doubtful' ('Questions and Answers', *EEB2*, 30-2).

question confirms the theoretical drift noted earlier towards positions closer to anabaptism than those of Thomas Helwys. There are other such signs. The messengers of 1626 were apologetic about their administration of the sacraments, both baptism and Communion, and presented a muddy account of their practices.⁶⁵ As to baptism, they treated it as equivalent to other ministerial functions, and conceded that 'not every member of the body may minister the sacraments'. They reaffirmed only that 'there are servants of the body' who, though not ordained, could 'preach, baptise, and build churches and perform other public actions with the consent of the church when the bishops are not present'. This follows Murton's restriction of baptism to those 'of ability' earlier noticed, and is at odds with the spirit of Helwys's approach. He had devoted five pages to proving that 'any disciple of Christ in what part of the world soever' could teach and convert disciples and 'may and ought also to baptize them'. He had not restricted these tasks to 'servants of the body'.⁶⁶

However, on many issues the five churches maintained their earlier positions. Only the Tookey group softened its views on magistracy and oaths. Its letters are significant in revealing differences both within the group and between it and the other churches. Amongst them, for the first time in an ~~English~~ ^{in England} baptist church of the seventeenth century, clearly anabaptistical views were in evidence – on the flesh of Christ, on his deity, and even on oaths and the magistracy. Still, the majority opinion in this group was in favour of taking oaths on practical grounds, because refusal would be accounted treason. They did not want to be considered 'dangerous and unquiet people', though 'some of us may refuse, without much guilt or disadvantage'; they were against both taking up arms and magistratical positions, but not on a clear basis: 'Some of us will not do so for conscience sake, others for that of peace' (ie peace with their colleagues). Later they pressed the opinion of their majority, that Christ had forbidden only wrong and inappropriate use of oaths. On war, 'some of us are of the same opinion with you' but others thought 'it is allowed to Christians to use worldly weapons in a worldly warfare for a righteous matter... a just war, with which they must protect themselves'.⁶⁷ The other English churches refused to retreat on these issues. When the Waterlanders demanded that no magistrate should be a church member, they pointed out that the Dutch themselves allowed the holding of 'some offices of magistracy' by which 'worldly things are regulated, if they have nothing to do with blood, war, and weapons'. The five churches repeated Helwys's core argument robustly: God 'has given the sword in their hands to revenge on him who commits evil', but not 'to protect his spiritual kingdom'.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Five churches to Ries, *EEB2*, 23; *Objections*, 64-5; *Burrage1*, 273.

⁶⁶ Five churches to Ries, *EEB2*, 27; *Objections*: 65, Murton, *Description*, 163

⁶⁷ Tookey to Ries, 3 June 1624, *EEB2*, 23; Tookey to Ries, 17 March 1625, *EEB2*, 39, 40

⁶⁸ Five churches to Ries, 12 Nov 1626, *EEB2*, 28, 29

In November 1626, Ries posed several questions to the churches, but the replies were unsatisfactory. In a letter of 25 November, listing unresolved differences on communion, unordained officers, oaths and the magistracy, Ries sent word that affiliation had been refused⁶⁹ It seems that negotiations were resumed, perhaps after a long gap. A letter from the Lincoln church (5 September 1630) indicates their resentment of earlier attempts by the Waterlanders to reverse their exclusion of unknown persons; they defended themselves unreservedly, often in irritable tones. Interestingly, it was Amsterdam, rather than London, which was apparently trying to exert fraternal pressure. This obscure Waterlander intervention seems to indicate an earlier period of closer relations, but if so, this letter certainly closed it.⁷⁰

6 The English remaining in Holland, and their friends

It is important that all these English correspondents were careful to address their concerns not to their countrymen, who remained a group affiliated to the Waterlander congregation, but to the Dutch Waterlander leaders, despite the difficulties posed by language, to which Tookey refers. It may be that direct contacts had been maintained with the English in Amsterdam. But there is no record of this. In the preface entitled 'A Mistery Discovered', *A very plain and well grounded treatise* was presented 'As God hath brought it to our hands, translated out of the Dutch tongue'. Murton said that he had seen what was evidently this work, 'translated out of Dutch and printed in English', but not that he or his followers had issued it. The author argues not only from biblical texts and the earliest fathers, but also from Protestant teachers such as Bullinger. Perhaps this was a work of the Waterlanders, whose traditions had been influenced by Reformed theology; they now sheltered the group once led by John Smyth, and perhaps one of these translated. Anyway, this work does not provide evidence for contact between Amsterdam and the returned Baptists in England before the exchange of letters in 1624-6.⁷¹

The English in Holland, led from 8 June 1620 until 1639 by Thomas Piggot, continued to meet separately in the Bakehouse, but effective control of their discipline and government was in the hands of the Dutch leaders. Also in 1620, the Bakehouse was bought by an English sympathiser, John Jordan, who left money to the English poor. Over the next years, a process of gradual integration seems to have taken place; the offspring of members learned Dutch, and there were inter-marriages. Though about sixty English persons joined the congregation between 1615 and 1640, including, in 1630, Jane Morton, John's widow, the overall impression is of a growing

⁶⁹ Questions and answers, November 1626, *EEB2*, 30-32; Ries to five churches, *TBHS* 4, (1915) 250-4 (in Dutch and with translation)

⁰ Lincoln church to Waterlanders, MS B 1376, Dutch in *Burridge2*, 243-8; trans *EEB2*, 41-44

⁷¹ *A Plain and Well grounded treatise*, eg 13-14; Murton, *Description*, 154

together with the Dutch.⁷² But alongside the English Waterlanders in Amsterdam, were others of their countrymen who developed different and significant connections.

During his polemic with John Smyth, Richard Clyfton revealed not only the breach with Thomas Helwys, but also a second schism, in which ‘many’ of Smyth’s church ‘have separated themselves from the rest, holding the error about the incarnation of Christ’.⁷³ On 8 July 1611, Matthew Saunders and Cuthbert Hutten, former members of the Ancient Church, reported the presence in Amsterdam of ‘Master Smith an Anabaptist of one sort, and master Helwys of another, and master Busher of another ...to speak nothing of Pedder, Henry Martin, with the rest of those Anabaptists’.⁷⁴ Leonard Busher appears here not as an individual but as leader of a tendency, which, like those of Smyth and Helwys was distinguished from ‘anabaptists’ around Pedder and Martin (early seceders from Johnson’s church).⁷⁵ Busher’s *Religion’s Peace* (1614) called, like Thomas Helwys, for complete religious toleration, on the basis of a similar understanding of the state and citizenship. He did not appear on either list (1610 and 1615) of applicants to the Waterlander Mennonites; Burrage was right that he was ‘connected with the third section of Smyth’s congregation’.⁷⁶

It is clear that Busher continued to hold unorthodox christological views, for many years later he set them out in print, provoking a response from James Toppe of Tiverton in 1647.⁷⁷ These views were connected in his and other cases with rejection of the rightness or relevance of formal ordinances. Busher thought ‘the apostolic church, which is scattered and driven into the wilderness and desert of this world, may be again gathered together, both Jews and Gentiles, into visible and established congregations’ which suggests he did not then belong to one.⁷⁸ Helwys referred to the existence in Holland of a ‘scattered flock, that say he is in the desert; that is no where to be fond in the profession of the gospel according to the ordinances thereof, until their extraordinary men (they dream of) come, which shall not be, until there come a new Christ, and a new gospel’.⁷⁹ Such views were not restricted to a few individual English eccentrics. In Holland there had developed powerful currents which stressed the role of reason, or of the spirit, against the claims of tradition or organisation. These included those influenced by the ideas of Caspar

⁷² Sprunger, ‘English Puritans and Anabaptists’ *MQR* 46 (1972), 113-28, esp 119, 126

⁷³ Clifton, *Plea*, epistle, and see 14.

⁷⁴ Lawne etc, *Prophane Schism* (1612), 56: letter 8 July [n.s.] 1611

⁷⁵ *Burrage I*, 147, 201, 222-4

⁷⁶ See S. Wright, ‘Leonard Busher, Life and Ideas’, *BQ* 39 (2001), 275-92; *Burrage I* 244; 2, 177-8.

⁷⁷ ‘Christ’s Personall and Monarchicall Reign on Earth’, B.L., Sloane 63, ff 36-57, Toppe’s reply to a book by Busher, now lost, criticising the millennarianism of Toppe and John Archer. *Burrage I*, 279-80, Burgess, ‘James Toppe ..’ in *TBHS* 3, 193-207; Wright, ‘Leonard Busher..’

⁷⁸ *Religion’s Peace* (1646), 49, 42, 43.

⁷⁹ *An Advertisement*, 51, and see also *Objections*, 64-5; strangely, despite the evidence in *Religion’s Peace*, Burrage did not connect Busher to Helwys’s ‘scattered flock’, though he mentions Wightman.

Schwenckfeld, which especially after 1590, flourished amongst the Mennonites under the guidance of their pre-eminent leader Hans de Ries.⁸⁰ Then there was Socinianism, a movement which combined christological unorthodoxy with a critical approach, not least to formal rules and institutions. Polish Socinians had led the way in the 1570s in demanding complete religious toleration, even for Jews and Turkish Muslims, and this was connected to tendencies to seek common ground between different religions and to oppose the attempts of rulers to impose confessional orthodoxies on heterodox populations.⁸¹ In 1598 the missionaries, Christopher Ostorodt and Andrew Wojdowski arrived; over the next sixty years were imported many editions of the famous press of Racov; Hans de Ries entered into controversy with the Socinians from 1610.⁸² The sceptical, tolerant flavour of Socinianism found a ready audience in the great Dutch trading centres, notably amongst Arminian Remonstrants; their expulsion in 1619 gave birth to the Collegiant movement at Rijnsburg near Leyden, in which rationalistic and spiritualising currents could flow unhindered by clerical or confessional restraints. For the Collegiants, 'the few truly spiritual souls left in the midst of the decadent world made up an invisible church that was not corrupted by contact with worldly sin and evil'; though unable to 'rebuild the true visible church of Christ, these pious souls could meet together in small groups to pray, discuss religious questions, read the bible, and help each other to lead spiritual lives.'⁸³

The Dutch Collegiants drew on and reinforced strong anticlerical biases, providing new hearers for socinian ideas. It is clear that they acquired baptism by immersion from the Polish Socinians or their Dutch converts.⁸⁴ Both Faustus Socinus (d1604), and the first edition of the Racovian catechism, were dismissive of water baptism. But the Polish brethren continued rebaptizing by immersion, and the practice is treated positively in later editions of the catechism. It is explicitly approved in the authoritative 1642 confession of the Racovian pastor Jonas Schlichting who urged the believer to commit himself in newness of life 'to the imitation of the death and resurrection of Christ', explaining: 'The immersion in water and the emergence from

⁸⁰ C. J. Dyck, 'Hans De Ries (d1638) and Socinianism' in *Socinianism and its Role*, ed L. Szczucki (1983), 85-95, and idem, 'Hans de Ries,' Thesis (1962), 195-229.

⁸¹ Men such as Budny and Paleologus sought not just international peace, 'but also for a universalistic or interfaith toleration.' G. Williams, *Radical Reformation* (1992), 1150.

⁸² Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism*, (1946), 537-40; S. Voolstra, 'The Path to Conversion... Nittert Obbes', in W. Klassen (ed), *Anabaptism Revisited* (1992).

⁸³ A. Fix, *The Dutch Collegiants in the Early Enlightenment*, (1991), 86; R. McLaughlin, *Caspar Schwenckfeld*, (1988), 139

⁸⁴ Scheffer 'Overzicht van den geschiedenis ...', 119-170; Collegiants approved immersionist rebaptism, but did not insist upon it.

the water signify this'..⁸⁵ In a passage in *Religion's Peace* Busher referred to immersion in terms similar to those of Schlichting; he thought God 'hath commanded to be baptized in the water; that is dipped for dead in the water' new members of a true church. It is extremely unlikely that these words signify a metaphorical, and not a physical baptism. They appear in the original edition of 1614, five years before the first recorded Collegiant immersion, of John Everston Geesteranus (1586-1622).⁸⁶ Given the prior existence of immersionist Socinians in the Dutch Netherlands and his own christological unorthodoxy, it seems a fair presumption that they were the source of Busher's otherwise mysterious passage. No Dutch Mennonites seem to have used immersion before 1619 and no antipaedobaptist is known to have practiced immersion in England till 1641. These considerations suggest that to the traditional view that the practice was probably learned by the English from the Collegiants needs to be added (as a matter of clarification) the greater certainty that they had in turn had it from the Socinians; Busher's statement tends to confirm this.

None of this clears up the obscure problem of who effected the transmission of the practice to antipaedobaptists in England, let alone the even more impenetrable question of why. One aspect of the matter should be mentioned here. In 1636 Daniel Rogers pointed out that the way in which baptism was ordinarily understood, by sprinkling or pouring, was at odds with the symbolic importance attributed to it by the Church of England. He noted that in Christ's symbolic baptism, 'The soule (by faith in the covenant) feels her descent into the water. To become a spirit of dividing her into the laver and blood, and grave of the Lord Jesus, her being under the water... her arising up from the water, to become a spirit of Resurrection'. But, he demanded to know, 'what resemblance of ingrafting, putting on of Christ is there in sprinkling ... What resemblance of our burial or resurrection with Christ is there in it?'. He did not think infants should be 'dived to the bottom' but that word signified 'the true act of the minister, to dip or dop the body or some part of it into the water', and therefore wanted it required of him 'to dip or dive the infant more or less (except in the case of weakness).' Now Rogers was a paedobaptist of unimpeachable credentials, as he was keen to stress: 'Look not here for Popish, anabaptistical, brownistical or schismatical sacraments, huddled up by a false church in their houses barnes or corners'.⁸⁷ That his book was licensed might be thought surprising, despite all protestations against schismatical intent, but it fitted with something of a trend in the period of high Laudianism, towards a growing stress on worship, as opposed to preaching, and the importance of visual symbolism, both in the

⁸⁵ G. H. Williams. *The Polish Brethren* (2 vols: Harvard Theological Studies no 30, 1980), I, 219; Confession, printed, *ibid* II, 389-418 cited from *ibid*, 412; see *ibid* 417n39; *idem*, 'The Place of the *Confessio Fidei* of Jonas Schlichting...', in *Socinianism and its Role...* ed L. Szczucki, 103.

⁸⁶ *Religion's Peace*, 59; R. Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, (1850), II, 550-57.

⁸⁷ Daniel Rogers, *A Treatise of the Two Sacraments*, epistle to reader sig A4, 70-1

architecture of the church and the rituals performed by the priest. Though it may appear a rather incongruous source but it seems that the first stirrings of doubt about the mode of baptism in England amongst paedobaptists of semi-separatist circles, including Henry Jessey, may have arisen in the space created for them by Laudian sacramentalism. The changing times had unintended consequences, and it is time to review some more of them.

7 The Baptists and Politics in the 1630s

In the reign of James I and the tenure of Abbot, for most of the puritan clergy and the most radical amongst the educated laity, the belief that the basic truths of Calvinist doctrine were embodied in the Anglican church helped anchor them to it. But there were those for whom such considerations amounted to little, for whom orthodoxy could appear merely a fig-leaf for the bishops. Arminianism did not carry the freight later loaded up through sponsorship by high church enthusiasts. If the false church in England spoke the language of Calvinism, they might have reasoned, then was it not logical to abandon both? The Baptists spoke to such people, offering complete organisational separation. They met with some success. During the reign of James, the rudiments of a General Baptist denomination were assembled.

But conditions were changing. From the later twenties onwards, there was shift amongst the episcopate and in the intellectual cadre of the Church away from high-calvinist orthodoxy, as embodied by Abbot. There were moderates and extremists amongst the new men, but all embraced a sense that religion was too much dominated by preaching, not enough by praying; that ritual, and the ritual calendar, had been too starkly cut back in many places, and that the architecture and iconography of churches had been too rigorously pruned. In eschewing the vestments and signs (surplice, tippet and cross) of their office, ministers undermined the corporate authority of the priesthood to which they had been ordained; this authority was further eroded by the indulgence of too much freedom for exercises, lectures and the repetition of sermons, in which laymen presumed too far in discussing and interpreting the Word. The repositioning of the communion table, so often an occasion of dissension, richly symbolised the central underlying theme of the Laudians' campaign, the distancing (and then railing off) of the laity from mysteries to be guarded by a renovated priesthood. The new men were also highly critical, sometimes from positions identifiable with those earlier pressed by Arminius, of high Calvinism. Under Abbot, this orthodoxy had helped reconcile puritans to the Jacobean church, at the price of their indulgence in the many things which the Laudians now found wanting in its liturgy and style. In addition, however, through its stress on God's immutable decrees, high calvinist thought tended to treat the mass of reprobate humanity as mere objects of human

discipline; the spiritual functions of religion were reserved to the elect. These people, identified through the 'marks of saving grace', were by no means necessarily co-extensive with the priestly or secular elite. There is no doubt that for many Laudians and their friends in the state, such ideas were profoundly subversive of the religious, social and political order. Doubtless also their suspicions were abundantly confirmed by the Presbyterian inspirers of the Scottish Covenant.

There is evidence, at least from London and Kent, to suggest that the Laudian drive to impose ceremonial conformity against puritans within the church, though deterring some, encouraged others to greater radicalism; any tendency to accommodate voluntary religion was increasingly frowned on. As puritan lecturers were suspended and a practice closer to the preferred Laudian style was imposed in the parishes, the effect was to drive the most zealous puritans to the margins of parish life, where some were emboldened to regroup in semi-separatist and separatist conventicles. Particularly in the London area, growing numbers of these were uncovered. From 1632, the semi-separatist congregation under John Lathrop which had been founded by Henry Jacob in 1616, seems to have attracted growing numbers, many of whom soon embraced more rigorous ecclesial politics. A series of secessions followed, in which figures such as Samuel Eaton, William Kiffin and John Spilsbury embraced full separation.⁸⁸ It is quite clear both from official and non-conformist records that the numbers organised in this growing family of groups were themselves growing apace. Despite the anathemas against schismatics hurled by Laud and London allies such as John Featley, therefore, there is evidence that their policy drove many of its victims towards the separatists.

The Baptists too can fairly be seen as part, though semi-detached, of the broad puritan tradition which William Laud was determined to defeat. During the 1630s, they too often experienced greater hostility from the authorities in church and state.⁸⁹ But it may be doubted whether they progressed much in the thirties. In parts of Lincolnshire, the Baptists appear to have been too firmly implanted to be easily uprooted, for the evidence of visitations suggests a continuing and vigorous defiance of efforts to impose conformity. Still, judging from their extreme rarity in ecclesiastical records recently studied, and the absence of official alarm at the spread of their conventicles, the baptists made little progress in the five areas they had colonised and there is little evidence of new conquests. Only in Notts does it seem likely that there was

⁸⁸ M Tolmie, *Triumph of the Saints*, chapter 1.

⁸⁹ Toppe petitioned Laud from Newgate, 7 Aug 1639 for release from a 'long and tedious imprisonment'; a note says that he refused the oath (*CSPD 1639* p433). Toppe may be identifiable with 'John Fort' of Tiverton fined £500 by High Commission on 17 October; he had connections in Salisbury (Burgess, 'Salisbury and Tiverton' *TBHS* 3 (1912), 1-7; 'James Toppe', *TBHS* 3 (1913), 193-211.

progress,⁹⁰ though ground may have been gained in Gloucestershire and Sussex on the eve of the civil war.⁹¹ Acheson did not meet with any prewar evidence of baptists in Kent, the most obvious county for their expansion, a stronghold from the mid 1640s, close to London, with ports offering connections with the Netherlands. As far as is known the first Kentish convert, William Jeffrey, acquired his new views at the start of the civil war.

This comparative failure to profit from discontent at the drift of events in the established church contrasts with the experience of the semi separatists, at least in London. These grew quickly in the thirties, for they stood closer than the baptists, both organisationally and theoretically, to those zealous pillars of the parish for whom life was becoming intolerable. Having been able earlier to make a virtue of their isolation, it may be that the Baptists now suffered from the consequences of their success. It is likely that their theology became a more important handicap. Most orthodox puritans identified Arminianism as the chief of their enemies and saw it as a means to advance popery: 'the little thief put into the window of the church to unlock the door', in the words of the Earl of Bedford.⁹² There was a tradition amongst calvinists of identifying Anabaptism as a snare set by the Jesuits, exemplified by attachment to justification by works. Respectable puritans were thus inoculated against Arminian tenets, and some Baptists also held unorthodox ideas about Christology. These sat easily with plebeian anti-clericalism, and their future lay closer than most may then have suspected. But to most respectable puritans of the thirties, defending the practical gains which they had made within the orthodox calvinist framework of the official church, such views must have seemed the merest heresy.

Still, the baptists had developed an independent religious tradition, which if it could survive these difficult years might still make something of an impact, should the political scenery change. Politically, there were two tendencies amongst the English, which both sought to make a sharp separation between the holy and the profane.⁹³ For those who stood in the tradition of Smyth and the Mennonites, to be found mainly (at this time) in Holland, this was a division between the people and institutions of the true church and the people and institutions of the

⁹⁰ Lucy Hutchinson recalled that in summer 1644 her husband had imprisoned some canoneers of the Nottingham garrison for holding 'conventicles in their own chamber' (*Memoirs*, 182); later in the narrative, she recalled that at the time, one of their documents had stimulated her doubts over baptism: it was only 'in this year' (1646) that she, 'happening to be with child, communicated her doubts to her husband' (ibid, 243). Knutton, *Seven questions*. (1645), E25/20 also says Baptists were active in the garrison in 1644.

⁹¹ John Tombes preached in Bristol in 1643; in July there were baptist members of the Broadmead church; Walter Coles of Painswick, Glos, and 'Hodson' of Gloucester, both apparently rebaptised by late 1641 (Hayden, ed., *Broadmead Records*, 98; J. Tombes, *ATT* 6, Wynell, *Covenant's Plea*, Br-v, 36).

⁹² Quoted, N. Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-revolution' in C. Russell, *Origins of the English Civil War*, (1973) 119-43 at 136

⁹³ See eg W. Hudson's attempt in 'Who Were the Baptists?', *BQ* 16, 303-12 to deny the influence of anabaptism on Anglo-Saxon baptists; and Earnest Payne's reply, 'Who were the Baptists', *BQ* 16 339-42.

world, which (with varying degrees of strictness) were to be shunned. In England, the baptists stood chiefly in the Helwys tradition, which divided each individual human life into its material and spiritual aspects. With lines of division set along this plane, only the false church was to be rigorously shunned by individual saints. Their duty to the civil magistrate arose from an acceptance of the benefits of citizenship and of the protection afforded by the state, a sphere understood as worthy of both godly and patriotic support. This must be contrasted with the dutiful obedience under protest which pacifistic anabaptists undertook in respect of civic duties. The patriotic baptists welcomed civic duties; only if magistrates trespassed upon the spiritual sphere did they find occasion for enforced obedience or the suffering of penalties.

For those who accepted anabaptist views, the presence of both magistrates in the church and of church members in the state was forbidden; for the state was part of satan's realm. Their outlook reflected and could even perpetuate a certain social radicalism, because it tended towards denying the legitimacy of the magistrates' intervention in members' civil lives. In the light of traumatic historical experience, their leaders demanded abstention in politics: not only pacifism but passivity, for the state as a whole was both irredeemable, and not to be confronted. This outlook tended also to generate authoritative priestly structures in the separate commonwealth of the church; the pastorate acted to enforce shunning ordinances, and stood watch over the potentially dangerous border between church members and the state.

In the opposing view developed by Helwys, the godly protested their loyalty to the civil magistrate, and could participate in all areas of the state's material activity as patriotic citizens; they were allowed to become state's servants. Symmetrically, godly and repentant magistrates were allowed rebaptism and membership as a private citizen of their spiritual church, on the basis that 1) their authority (by virtue of their magistratical status) over the material lives of the members was no greater than any other magistrate, and 2) their authority (by virtue of their church membership) over the spiritual lives of the church members was no greater than any other member. In principle, then, JPs could become members of Baptist churches, and symmetrically, baptist members could become JPs. Of course, neither seemed likely in the reign of James I, and Helwys did not spell out the logic of his approach to state compulsion in religion. But it too had radical implications: Baptist magistrates (and perhaps even citizens outside the magistracy) ought to oppose the actually existing policies of the state in using compulsion in spiritual matters. Baptists could in principle act to shape the rules and practices of a state to prevent it from so transgressing, for God's law overrode patriotic loyalty as a final authority.

This amounted to a theoretical foundation for political activism.

5. Refoundation and Recovery, 1638 – 1642

1 Henry Jessey, Samuel Eaton and the Origins of the Particular Baptists

During the 1630's there emerged from the semi-separatist and separatist movement in London, a tendency amongst Baptists which probably shared much of the Calvinist orthodoxy then common amongst puritans. Much of what we know about it depends on transcriptions made by Benjamin Stinton, from manuscripts obtained from Richard Adams, co-pastor with William Kiffin from 1690, which he copied in 1711-12.¹ The document Stinton labelled 'no 1' gave some account of the foundation and development up to 1641 of the church founded by Henry Jacob and later led by John Lathrop and Henry Jessey. The narrative is broadly complemented by Stinton's no 2, which adds an account of the reinstitution of immersion at a ceremony by Richard Blunt and Samuel Blacklock.² In this the author sought to provide a more general account of the Particular Baptists' evolution, referring to six (Kiffin, Spilsbury, Kilcop, Munday, Hobson and Sheppard) of the thirteen signatories of their 1644 London confession, and giving the full list at the end.³ No 4 concerned the discussion on infant baptism in Jessey's church in 1644. Stinton rightly attributed nos 1 and 4 to Jessey himself; no 2, usually ascribed to William Kiffin, will be discussed below.⁴

Jessey's account, No 1, mentions other congregations only if they originated by secession from his own. On 12 September 1633, after discussion, nine persons 'denying the truth of the parish churches' had been granted dismissal. 'To these joyned Rich: Blunt' and others including Samuel Eaton, 'Mr Eaton with some others receiving a further baptism. Others joined to them [marg '1638'] These being of ye same judgement with Sam Eaton and desiring to depart' they were dismissed on 'June 8th 1638. They having first forsaken us & Joined with Mr Spilsbury' (his only appearance in the text); the name of six more seceders follow.⁵ 'No 2' explains that the seceders, holding that 'Baptism was not for infants but professed believers joined with Mr John Spilsbury.' This poses the question of why they preferred Spilsbury to Samuel Eaton, a former member who, the text seems to suggest, had been baptised much earlier, in 1633. Furthermore, a hostile witness reported that Spilsbury ~~had~~ had baptised Eaton, and not vice versa.⁶

However, an ingenious explanation has been proposed, which is consistent with Stinton's dates as they stand. Eaton, it is suggested, had undergone baptism in 1633 on an ultra-separatist

¹ 'A Repository of Divers Materials Relating to the English Anti-Paedobaptists Collected from Papers of faithful extracts'; for Adams, Ivimey ii, 256, 331, 589

² Probably the Samuel Blaiklocke apprenticed to William Fowke and later Hugo Warde, free of the Barber Surgeons company, 18 May 1641, 'Register of Freedoms, 1522-1664/5', Guildhall Micro 5265/1, 97

³ 'An Old MSS, giving some account of those baptists who first formed themselves into distinct congregations, or Churches in London — found amongst certain paper given me by Mr Adams'

⁴ Stinton nos 1 and 2 printed from the re-transcript of George Gould, in both *Burridge* 2, 292-302, 302-05 and in *TBHS*, 1 (1908) 205-25, 230-36, no 4 appeared *ibid*, 239-45.

⁵ No 1, *TBHS* 1, 220-1

⁶ Taylor, *A Swarm of Sectaries* [1641 E158(1), 6-7

basis centred upon the falsity of the established church.⁷ As a paedobaptist (in 1641), Jessey was able to report that the seceders of 1638 were 'of ye same judgement' as Eaton, only because he was then naively unable to distinguish the two forms of rebaptism. The author of no 2, by contrast, had come to stand for believers baptism, and therefore his report of the same event did not even mention Eaton's earlier baptism, because he did not recognise it as legitimate. It is suggested that, though Spilsbury had perhaps gone through an ultra-separatist stage himself, he had arrived at believers' baptism 'proper' before Eaton, whom he then re-re-baptised. Now there is no empirical evidence that Eaton or anyone else argued on this basis; the 'ultra-separatist' hypothesis appears as an external construct with which to explain anomalies; there are several reasons to doubt it: the logic which drove Smyth and Helwys to reject the established church as a false church also led them almost immediately to fix infant baptism as the basic flaw, in that by it a mixed membership was constituted. Jessey must surely have grasped during the extensive discussion held in his congregation over infant baptism, that several of his members rejected Eaton's 'ultra-separatist' rebaptism (had it existed) as false. The most militant and rigid of the ultra-separatists such as Kathleen Chidley, 'a brazen faced audacious old woman', as Edwards memorably called her, who condemned the use of former church buildings as impermissible, were paedobaptists; her son Samuel wrote a book against the Baptists.⁸

There is a simpler explanation than that proposed. The author of no 2 may not have been associated with the independent milieu when Eaton departed in 1633, arriving later, perhaps not long before the secessions to Spilsbury in June 1638. He therefore recorded these, but omitted Eaton's secession five years earlier; he knew little about it, and was aware that after Eaton's death the Baptists with him returned to Jessey and influenced the wider picture only by this means. Jessey was writing about his own congregation; Spilsbury had never been a member, so Jessey omitted his rebaptism; Eaton, however, was a famous former member who had died only two years earlier, so Jessey reported his secession, adding *en passant* a reference to his subsequent 'further baptism'. Now John Taylor's doggerel verse (1641) tells us that Spilsbury 'doth or did dwell over Aldersgate'; when Spilsbury was arrested in September 1641, he was resident at 'Aldersgate Street'; this strengthens the likelihood that Taylor, despite his hostility, was accurate in his other claim that Spilsbury had 'rebaptized anabaptist fashion one Eaton'. Some time after November 1638, Francis Tucker, an Anglican minister in gaol for debt, reported that Eaton had argued in several sermons that baptism was a 'doctrine of devils and its original was an institution from the devil'.⁹ This surely signified that Eaton had become an anti-paedobaptist.

⁷ Tolmie, 24, 192-5

⁸ Gang, I, 79-80, III, 170-1, S Chidley, *The Separatists Answer*, (1651) E643/22

⁹ B White, 'Samuel Eaton, d1639...' *BQ* 24 (1971), 10-21, White prints (ibid 16-21), Tucker's petition to Laud (SP16/406/64); an eye-witness account (SP16/407/127) of Eaton's funeral on 25 Aug 1639; and

But why had the June 1638 seceders joined Spilsbury, rather than Eaton? It seems from Elizabeth Eaton's petition that her husband was free in June 1638 and could therefore receive them. Now Spilsbury had probably been the rebaptised pastor of a group which had emerged from a separatist church (the Duppa church has been suggested) on the basis of believers baptism. But Eaton had seceded from Jessey in 1633 on a strict separatist basis ('denying the truth of the parish churches'). So when Eaton had from Spilsbury 'a further baptism', he became a rebaptised pastor of a group of strict separatist followers. Perhaps Eaton was unable to convince all of these of anti-paedobaptism, and some remained with him, unre baptized. When the seceders from Jessey of June 1638 came to consider which church they should join, it was the closed membership group led by Spilsbury, who was, in any case, the most senior figure, which they chose.

Unhappily there is no means to test this conjecture directly, other than the testimony of T.S. that Eaton's funeral was attended by at least two hundred persons, both 'Brownists and anabaptists', which can be variously interpreted. But after Eaton's death, some of its members, notably Richard Blunt, rejoined the Jessey church; this would be the more intelligible if they were moving, on the death of their pastor, from one open membership organisation to another. There is a difficulty in the apparent reversal of the radicalisation process involved, in which Blunt and others appear to have gone back from strict separatism to semi-separatism, but 'the drift of the parent church towards a separatist position' ^{has been remarked,} and it had maintained communion with the strict separatist Eaton church even before Jessey's arrival. The statement that Jessey and Barbon parted company 'by mutual consent' does not exclude the possibility of a developing disagreement over such matters. Barbon may have been concerned to maintain contact with the official structures, perhaps partly because he wanted to participate in city politics. He joined the Leathersellers livery in 1634, and was involved in parish politics throughout the 1640s.¹⁰

This reconstruction seems to fit all the available evidence, except the passage in Stinton no 1 which seems to give Eaton's baptism as 1633. Now despite the importance and authenticity of Stinton's transcripts, the reliability of these dates depends on the accuracy of the detailed layout, and there are reasons to doubt this. The margin of Stinton No 2 gives at least one serious error of dating, for it implies that Kiffin joined the Eaton congregation in 1633, whereas he himself reveals in his autobiography that he joined 'an independent congregation' only in 1638. It seems possible that the margin date in Jessey's account No 1 may also be inaccurate, and that Eaton was baptised some time after his secession in 1633. In each case, a slightly misplaced marginal addition might be at fault. Many years ago, A. Newman suggested that Stinton, whilst attempting conscientiously to copy his documents, might have taken the opportunity to add into

Elizabeth Eaton's petition (SP16/499/7), recalling his imprisonment 'one whole yer' before his death, Taylor, *Swarme*, 6-7, PRO KB9/823/113; D.Mock, 'Samuel Eaton', *G-ZI*, 242-3.

Tolmie, 18, 24, 65, Lindley, *London*, 82; *G-ZI*, 37-8, Barbon became an auditor of the Leathersellers wardens, 6 August 1644 Leathersellers' Court Book 1632-50, *TBHS* 1, 232-3; Barber, *Small Treatise*, 29

the margin his own dates, at which (according to his reading of the contents) he thought various events must have taken place. The marginal dates in Stinton documents no 1 and no 2 could, in many (but not all) cases be deduced by a transcriber, either directly because they appear in the text, or relate to textual references (notably Jacob's books) datable by other means. In several cases there is excessive duplication of dates between text and margin, again suggesting later additions. Given Stinton's mistakes and probable mistakes over dating, it seems a pity that Newman's very sensible suggestion has been abandoned in favour of the canonical approach.

2 Stinton's Transcript no 2 and William Kiffin

The status of 'Stinton no 2', and the identity of its author, has long been a matter of debate. Crosby said that his own account of the re-establishment of immersion was based partly upon 'an antient manuscript, said to be written by Mr William Kiffin', referring to it elsewhere as the basis of a paraphrased passage 'collected from a manuscript of Mr William Kiffin'.¹¹ But there was genuine doubt on the point, and establishing the status of the source was not helped by its having been mislaid. Scholars wishing to examine the evidence had to rely on a transcript by George Gould of Norwich and his amanuensis, William Keymer.¹² In 1896 W. Whitsitt issued '*A Question in Baptist History. Whether the Anabaptists practiced Immersion before the year 1641?*'; replying negatively to his own question largely on the strength of this document (as copied by Gould), which he thought, with Crosby, had been written by Kiffin. In 1899 there appeared a violent attack on the authenticity of 'Stinton no 2', which not only doubted Kiffin's authorship, but suggested that the document was a forgery and a fraud upon the denomination.¹³

In the course of his comprehensive demonstration that, in accordance with no 2, immersion had been re-established in England about 1641, Lofton also proved decisively the authenticity of the manuscript. But doubts remained as to the author.¹⁴ Gould's transcript of nos 1 and 2 were reproduced by Champlain Burrage¹⁵, and also by W. T. Whitley. Whitley argued that it had probably been written by Henry Jessey, as a part, with nos 1 and 4 (the debate on rebaptism in the Jessey Church in 1644), of an overall account of his church. Whitley noted that Crosby did not provide any authority for his reference to Kiffin's authorship; this claim was also undermined by having Crosby's having printed in quotes a passage which was not actually quoted from either document, but which irresponsibly combined them, with highly misleading results.¹⁶

¹ Crosby1, 101, 148

² B White, 'Who Really Wrote the "Kiffin Manuscript"', *BHH*, 1, October 1966, 4,

³ J Christian, *Baptist History Vindicated*, (1899)

¹⁴ G Lofton, *English Baptist Reformation*, (1899); idem, *Defense of the Jessey Records*, (1899)

¹⁵ Burrage1, 292-302, 302-06

¹⁶ W. Whitley, 'The Rise of the Particular Baptists', *TBHS* vol 1, 226-9

However, in 1968, B. R. White showed that Whitley's notion that no 2 began essentially where no 1 left off, was mistaken.¹⁷ The chronological overlap of the two accounts in the period 1633–41, and factual inconsistencies between them, destroyed the hypothesis that they were complementary accounts by the same author. White built a strong case for the traditional attribution of no 2 to William Kiffin. He pointed out that the reproduction elsewhere by Crosby of obvious mistakes from the text of no 2 such as the reference to the non-existent book '2 Colossians' showed that he had been faithful to it. He urged several persuasive reasons to believe that Crosby had not been responsible for the misleading harmonisation of the two documents in his *History*. These included the fact that Crosby attributed his infamous quoted passage to 'an account collected from a manuscript of Mr William Kiffin'; this indicated that the act of collecting, or paraphrasing, was not his own work but that of the man he relied on, Benjamin Stinton. It seems essential at the outset to pose clearly an unavoidable consequence of the foregoing discussion. White's argument involved rescuing Crosby from the accusation of having misleadingly paraphrased Stinton's documents, but it did so on the basis that Stinton himself was responsible. The result was at least five misleading statements, which amounted to 'a demonstrably false, not to say careless, misinterpretation of them'.¹⁸ Is it likely that the man responsible for such a travesty of the two original documents had taken scrupulous care in transcribing them in the first place?

There is in Stinton no 2 one piece of evidence which narrows slightly the range of dates within which the document can have been written. This is a reference to 'Captain Spencer', who with one Green had founded a church in Crutched Friars, London, a church later joined by 'Paul Hobson', and who was later associated with Kiffin and others at the estate of Theobalds in Herts. Spencer's military background remains uncertain, but it seems that neither the cornet in Robert Lilburne's regiment of horse (1647), nor the captain in Harrison's (1648) were captains before 1648. No John Spencers occur on the original officer list of the New Model Army. The John Spencer named in *The Vindication of the Officers of the Army under Sir Thos Fairfax* presented to the Commons on 27 April 1647 was a cornet. The agitator of Colonel Hewson's regt was Edward Spencer. The Spencer who attended the Whitehall debates from late November 1648 may have been the Captain of Harrison's Regiment probably identifiable with the man who had earlier attended the Putney debates in October 1647 as a cornet.¹⁹ It is therefore unlikely that 'no 2' can have been written before 1648. Further, not long after, Paul Hobson dropped out of the church,

¹⁷ White 'Who Really Wrote'; idem, 'Baptist Beginnings and the 'Kiffin MS'', *BHH* 1, (Jan 1967), 27-37

¹⁸ *Crosby* 1, 148-9; White, 'Who Really Wrote', 5 lists the statements not to be found in Stinton which appear in Crosby's paraphrase. 1) Jacob had founded a separatist church, 2) those seceding in 1633 did so on an antipaedobaptist basis 3) these seceders were baptised in 1633 4) Kiffin was a member of the Jersey church who seceded in 1638, 5) Green and Spencer founded a Baptist church in 1639

¹⁹ R. Temple, 'The Original officer list', *BIHR*, 59 (1986), 50-77; Rushworth (1721-20) vi, p471-2; *The Humble Remonstrance* (9 Nov 1647) E413/6; *The Brownists Synagogue* (1641) E172(32), 5.

and was received again only in 1654.²⁰ Would the writer have referred to him in terms of such familiarity, either in that period, or after Hobson's disgrace for adultery in 1665? A second Particular Baptist, Captain [Thomas] Spencer, was active in Scotland, signed the Confession of Faith at Leith in 1653, and was probably the man named as a prominent military baptist in 1659; one might think that a Baptist historian writing during the fifties would distinguish the two Baptist Captains Spencer.²¹

These references in 'Stinton no 2' disprove the suggestion that it was compiled about 1643 as a help to the consultation with the Independents in the Jessey Church, and show that it was almost certainly not written earlier than 1648.²² They suggest it is more likely to have been written after the Restoration. By 1660, both men were widely known as veterans in the denomination and 'Captain Spencer', though no longer a captain, was still known as one. To compile a history at such a later date would make sense: leading Particular Baptists, no longer influential in the councils of state, might think the time ripe to review the history of their organisation, so that newer recruits could be taught something of where they had come from. This fits well with the view that Kiffin was the author. After 1660, he was in as good a position to compile a history as anyone. It is only a pity that he did not!

Yet there is reason to doubt his authorship of Stinton no 2. First the text concentrates heavily upon the details of the ~~re~~^{Blunt-Blacklock}baptism by immersion, which Kiffin, even after he became a Baptist, thought a false and disorderly start. Second, all authorities agree that he was a member with Samuel Eaton for a time, since no 2 itself places him in that congregation. But if the author were Kiffin, a former member of Eaton's congregation, he would hardly have omitted from his account the secession and re-baptism of his former pastor (irrespective of the nature of that rebaptism). Further, no 2 also reported of Jessey's congregation that in 1640 'The church became two by mutual consent'. Why, in an account of its progress in this period, should the author refer to 'the church', without further qualification, if he had then belonged to another? Of course, an outsider, setting out to write a history of Jessey's church, might have referred to it in this way; but *Stinton no 2* was actually about the wider origins of the particular Baptists, so the reference to 'the church' must strongly imply that the writer was, or at least had at some time been, an insider with Jessey.

It has been suggested that, having joined Eaton in 1638, Kiffin may have returned with others to the Jessey church following the disintegration of the congregation of his deceased pastor. Evidence for Kiffin's membership does seem to be contained in Jessey's account of the

²⁰ W. Whitley, 'The Rev Col Paul Hobson', *BQ* 9, 307-10 and R. Greaves, *Four Stewart Radicals*, 133-56 both omit this; Hobson, *Fourteen Queries* (1654) E1492(3), 'To the reader'.

²¹ *A Confession of Faith* (1653) preface 10 March, C Firth, *Scotland and the Commonwealth*, 274, 283. *Fenstanton*, 327, *CP4*, 160-1; *F-D*, 480

²² Tolmie's suggestion (*Tolmie*, 203) thus conflicts with his acceptance of John Spencer as the cornet in Lilburne's regiment in June 1647 (*ibid* 159); Whitley, (*TBHS* 1, 234) also gives 'about 1644'

1643 discussion on infant baptism in Stinton no 4, which includes a report of a speech by him on believers baptism.²³ To the possibility that Kiffin appeared here not as a member of the congregation but as an advisor, it has been rightly noted that the passage does not refer explicitly to any such advisory role in his case, as it does in that of other leaders listed. However, all the other 'pastors and elders' named (except Erbury) were, unlike Kiffin, not believers' baptists but Independents or Separatists; many were returned exiles, and unlike both Kiffin and Jessey, only one (Barbon) had been participants in semi-separatist circles in London in the late 1630s. Now, some time after 17 March 1644, twelve members of Jessey's church had become convinced of believers baptism and 'desired to enjoy it where they might, and joyned also, some with Bro Knollys, some with B. Kiffin.' There follow two columns of individual members of the Jessey congregation who then departed. The first is headed by Knollys and his wife, but the second does not feature Kiffin. Thus, Kiffin appears in this document as a speech maker, but not amongst the other pastors and elders said to have been consulted; unlike Knollys, he was not listed amongst the departing believers' baptists, but (like Knollys) he was joined by several of them. Taken together, these facts distinguish Kiffin from all others featuring in the document: he had a closer relationship with the Jessey congregation than the other consultants, but was not a member at the time, and therefore is not listed as leaving. This is confirmed by a passage in his autobiography which supplies a date. In 1643, Kiffin 'went to Holland with some small commodities, which I found good profit by. But on coming home again, I was greatly pressed by the people with whom I was a member, to continue with them'.²⁴ As it has been suggested, this was really a coy way of saying that Kiffin was then the pastor of a church; the trading venture was in 1643, and so Kiffin cannot have been with Jessey in spring 1644. This is confirmed by a second date: after the fall of Bristol on 26 July 1643, those members of Broadmead church who had earlier been baptized 'did sit down with Mr Kiffen and his Church in London, being likewise baptized'.²⁵

The conclusion is that Kiffin was not a member with Jessey in 1644. This does not decisively prove he was not a member earlier. But without the evidence of Stinton no 4, this remains a conjecture, and one which conflicts with Kiffin's own evidence. Certainly, his recollections of time 'these forty years', 'more than fifty years', 'sixty years' etc are round numbers and cannot be exactly relied on.²⁶ But his clear statement of congregational consistency should not be wished away, if it can be squared with other evidence. Kiffin's own account passes this test. As Stinton no 2 suggests, and as the date of his marriage to his wife Hannah approximately confirms, he joined Samuel Eaton's church in 1638 whilst Eaton was out of gaol. Perhaps during the pastor's incarceration, 'at the desire of the church I improved amongst them those small abilities that God

²³ *Tolme*, 55-6, 194-5; *Burrage* 2, 302; *TBHS* 1, 239-45, Whitley accepted his membership, *ibid* 242

²⁴ W. Orme, ed., *Remarkable passages... Kiffin*, (1823), 22

²⁵ B White, 'How did William Kiffin Join', *BQ* 23(1969-70), 201-7, *Broadmead*, 98

²⁶ *Tolme*, 195, citing Orme, *RP*, 45, 89 and W. Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse*, (1681), preface

was pleased to give me'. After Eaton's death, Kiffin probably became a leader; his own account of his imprisonment in 1641-2 strongly suggests he was singled out as leader of a congregation.²⁷ This helps account for his having been asked to contribute a preface to Goodwin's book. Kiffin was not otherwise well known or well connected at the time. Eaton was a recent martyr to the cause, whose funeral in September 1639 was attended by two hundred people: a preface by his successor would fitly ornament the work of the famous émigré pastor. Had Kiffin been just a lay member in Jessey's church it would be hard to explain Goodwin's choice; if he had been a teacher there, it would be hard to explain Jessey's omission of his name from the account in No 1.

Richard Blunt and others, having been members with Eaton, returned after his death in September 1639 to Henry Jessey. Now since Blunt in May 1640, with Jessey's active participation, began to discuss the mode of baptism, it seems likely that he had been one of those whom Eaton had baptised by affusion before his death. It does not follow that Kiffin, now leader after Eaton, had tried unsuccessfully to exclude Blunt or other Baptists. Eaton had been a highly charismatic pastor; Jessey was a trained and experienced minister, open-minded and tolerant of dissent, and it would be natural if some of Eaton's former members (irrespective of differences) might seek fellowship in his church, rather than with Kiffin. The young glover was still learning to preach, and perhaps lacked the confidence and experience to permit free-ranging debate; his group was probably separatist but paedobaptist in practice until his baptism in 1642.

The conclusion that Kiffin was a leader in succession to Eaton, and had never been a member with Jessey, however, means that he is unlikely to have been the writer of Stinton no 2 – who had. This is an unpalatable conclusion, because Kiffin was certainly a person who might be interested to write such an account. But Crosby wrote vaguely of 'an antient manuscript, said to be written by Mr William Kiffin' referring to it elsewhere as the basis of a paraphrased passage 'collected from a manuscript of William Kiffin'.²⁸ The chief reason for preferring Kiffin as the author (other than motive and opportunity) is that there was a chain connecting him with Richard Adams, Benjamin Stinton, and Thomas Crosby. But the chain is of provenance; it suggests only that Kiffin was probably the person who possessed the document, and passed it to Adams. Probably the doubt that Crosby reveals in his phrase 'said to be' was a report not of his own doubts (he had no means of independent judgement in the matter) but of the doubts of someone before him in the chain. A possible solution to these difficulties is that he (or Stinton) had been told that it was "Mr Kiffin's manuscript", and assumed Kiffin's authorship rather than his ownership. However that may be, the latter seems more certain than the former. Unfortunately, it is not to be expected that there will be much support for insisting on the insertion of an apostrophe 's' in 'Kiffin manuscript'.

²⁷ Orme, *RP*, 14, 15-16, 50; Kiffin, *Certain Observations on Hosea* (1642) reports his arrest at a meeting and committal, signed from the White Lion, 25 March 1642, White, 'How did William Kiffin join', 202

²⁸ *Burroughs* 2, 302, *Crosby* 1, 101, 148

3 The Reinstitution of baptism by immersion.

It is now about a century since Whitsitt, Lofton and Burrage decisively proved that immersion was not ordinarily in use amongst baptists in England before 1640. Shortly after that date, it was introduced, as Burrage confidently asserted, by 'The Particular Baptists', despite the fact that the first agreement of association of such a body (in London only) was not signed until 1644. It had always been known that the General Baptists had also commenced to immerse their new members about the same time, but the circumstances were obscure. Crosby referred to the 'revival of immersion in England' by 'the Baptists', rather than 'the Particular Baptists'. Lofton felt able to cite this in support of his view that the movement was of English baptists 'as a body, without distinction of General or Particular, or of section or locality'; unfortunately, his own account, probably in part because constrained by lack of evidence, said nothing about the movement amongst the 'Generals'.²⁹ Lofton, like others, concentrated upon the detailed evidence in Stinton's repository concerning those men, many later prominent Particular Baptists, who came to inaugurate the new practice.

Earlier, it was suggested that there were reasons to be cautious about the faithfulness of the transcriptions of Benjamin Stinton. But it is also clear that the original was not without its difficulties, of which three will be considered here. First there is the passage informing us that in May 1640 the church divided into two, one half led by Praise God Barbon, and 'the other half with Mr H Jessey Mr Richard Blunt with him being convinced of Baptism yt it also ought to be by dipping'. Since the author then goes on to deal with the inauguration of believers baptism by immersion, these phrases suggest that Jessey had become convinced of need for this, whereas we know that he himself was not rebaptised till 1645. In this case, the real meaning can be deduced from another manuscript of Stinton, which Crosby also copied, and which revealed that Jessey had come to the view that sprinkling was 'a modern corruption' and 'that immersion or dipping the whole body into the water, appeared to him to be the right manner of administering baptism... And tho he continued for two or three years after this, to baptize children, his manner was to dip them into the water'.³⁰ This clears the matter up. But by placing Jessey's views on the mode of baptism of infants in the context of a discussion about believers' baptism, Stinton no 2 is highly misleading.³¹ White thought that since no 2 is 'clumsily written' it was possible that Stinton's transcript may be 'no more corrupt than the original author left it'. But what we have in other passages may appear to be more than clumsiness.

²⁹ Crosby 1, 100; Lofton, *English Baptist Reformation*, (1899), 59, 83-4.

³⁰ Crosby 1, 310-11, printed, with trivial changes in punctuation, from 'An Account of some of the most eminent men', Angus Library, 36 G A e.10, f30r-v

³¹ It caused Burrage, who knew Jessey was not a believers Baptist, to think there must have been a break in the text between Blunt and Jessey, which had not survived from the original. Burrage 2, 330.

One of the document's few clear statements concerning 1640-42 reads: 'those persons that were persuaded Baptism should be by dipping ye body had met in two **companies**, and did intend so to meet after this'. The origin of these 'companies' is completely unexplained: they are 'companies' of 'those persons' and not 'congregations' or churches; it further suggests that the participants took no formal covenant, since the word 'covenant' 'was scrupled by some of them, but by mutual desires and agreement each testified'. Thomas Kilcop, one of those baptised by Blunt and Blacklock spelt out what Stinton no 2 tones down: 'we by the aforesaid ministry were converted, and were also baptzied, before we congregated'.³² The passage recording the event reads: 'These two companies did set apart one to Baptize the rest; so it was solemnly performed by them[.] Mr Blunt Baptized Mr Blacklock yt was a teacher amongst them, & Mr Blunt being Baptized, he & Mr Blacklock Baptized the rest of their friends that ware so minded...' This is not quite nonsense as it stands, but it skates around the question of how Blunt himself was baptised. The passage enabled many to suggest that he had been baptised in the Netherlands.³³ It is hard to resist the conclusion that it was deliberately ambiguous, seeming to imply that Blunt was unrebaptised when he baptised Blacklock, but failing to affirm or deny it directly.

The earlier, crucial passage in 'Stinton no 2' reads: 'hearing that some in ye Nether Lands had so practised they agreed and sent over Mr Rich Blunt (who understood Dutch) wth Letters of Comendation, who was kindly accepted there, and returned with Letters from them Jo Batte a Teacher there & from that Church to such as sent him'.³⁴ The emphasized passage, which could be made sensible, though repetitious, by omitting the word 'them', is not sensible as it stands. Did Stinton transcribe it accurately, or did he, wittingly or not, make changes which resulted in the above? Can it have been transcribed from a hard or heavily abbreviated script, or a damaged document? Or if the original scribe, whoever he was, wrote these words exactly as they appear here, then for what possible reason? The passage raises other issues. Blunt knew Dutch, we are told, and this was probably because he had acquired it in the course of earlier trading activities.³⁵ Whatever the case, a casual reader of this passage might easily conclude that the significance of Blunt's linguistic skill was that because of it, he had been chosen to confer with a particular **Dutch** congregation and their teacher 'Jo Batte'. The writer seems to imply this, and Crosby did not hesitate to conclude that it referred to 'an ancient congregation of foreign Baptists in the Low Countries'. The formulation 'some in ye Nether lands' seems almost wilfully ambiguous, especially given the fact that there were several thriving expatriate English

³² *Burrage* 2, 303; T Kilcop, *Unlimited authority of Christ's Disciples* (1651 E1377(5), 14-17

³³ *Burrage* 1, 333; idem, 'The Restoration of immersion ..', 70-89

³⁴ Stinton Repository, no 2 (Angus Library), accurately printed in White, 'Baptist Beginnings & Stinton no 2', 31, the original given here varies slightly from the printed version of Gould's transcript, *TBHS* 1, 233

³⁵ Perhaps Blunt was Kiffin's partner in the trading venture in Holland in 1643 (Orme, *RP*, 22) two men so named were made free of the Leathersellers in 1635 and 1637 Kiffin freed of the company in June 1638 and later referred to as a glover [T Edwards] *Tub Preachers Overturned* [1647 E384(7), title page, *Hinc Illae Lachrymae* (1648) E421 6, 3, 9.

communities there, including merchants, soldiers, and several hundred religious radicals who had taken refuge from the attentions of Laud and his bishops. The basic narrative is also consistent with a slightly different reading. Blunt was selected because, having learnt the language, he was well placed to make enquiries in the Low Countries about the various churches there, their history, beliefs and methods of baptism. This possibility may be important in the light of the fact that very few Dutch people spoke English. Was Blunt's grasp of written Dutch good enough to translate the letters which he brought back 'from that church to those that sent him', or were they in Latin, in order that Jessey (perhaps) could translate for the benefit of a congregation untrained in that language?³⁶ Such difficulties would not arise if the teacher 'Jo Batte' had been English.

What were the origins of these omissions and ambiguities? Stinton's crude collation of his two sources in the paraphrase he provided for Crosby does not suggest he was a scrupulously accurate transcriber, and it would probably be reasonable to assume that he made errors. But he explicitly affirms that the documents of his repository were copies of originals: the "Kiffin MS" was titled 'An Old MSS, giving some acco[unt] of those Baptists who first formed themselves...found among certain paper given me by Mr Adams'. Surely he tried to copy such documents conscientiously? Though there are difficulties in other transcriptions, there is nothing comparable to the opacity, at key points, of no 2; (the difficulties of no 1, for example, arise chiefly in relation to matters peripheral to the author's narrative focus). This alone may suggest that Stinton was not the main source of the linguistic peculiarities of the manuscripts he copied. As earlier suggested, there is reason to think no 2 may have been set down many years after the events it reports. Perhaps the document was merely preparatory; the author knew what he meant, and was merely jotting down notes for a history to be written up properly for publication. Still, it is hard to see why he found either repetition or ambiguities of sense useful.

The account of the rebaptism ceremony was obfuscatory, and it is possible that the account of Blunt's journey was also deliberately phrased ambiguously. His trip abroad seems to have been generally known and was not therefore deniable. Perhaps the same mind which declined to specify whether Blacklock had been rebaptised by an unbaptised administrator might also, through garbled references to discussions with 'that church', and the passage of 'letters from them', seek to present the background to the event in an orderly light. But he stopped short of actually stating clearly that such a 'foreign church' had been consulted, or of specifying where, because no church then existed in the Netherlands from which the Particular Baptists after the Restoration could admit to taking advice on such crucial matters – even more than earlier, the

³⁶ Crosby1, 102-3, other newly rebaptised members might have known Dutch. Mark Lucar was summoned by High Commission May 1632 ('Cases in the courts of Star Chamber and High Commission', S.Gardiner, ed., Camden Soc N.S., 39 (1886), 292-302), he and his wife Mabel seem to have emigrated, perhaps till 1642: 'Mabel Luggar to her husband at Amsterdam, 31 Oct 1633', in 'Licences to pass from England', *The Genealogist*, N.S. 26 (1910), 46; Burrage2, 299

taint of continental anabaptism was extremely dangerous, and Dutch connections could also be presented as unpatriotic. There are other suspicious passages. The author reported that those who had been baptized in two 'companies' were each headed by a 'teacher' rather than a pastor, and suggested that the reason why a covenant was not involved was because some objected to the formality of the word, or of the procedure. He did not spell out, as Kilcop did (in fewer words), the fact that those rebaptised had not previously congregated and had not deputed their pastor to baptise them. It seems highly suggestive that these were points of maximum sensitivity for the credit of the young denomination in its struggle to survive after the Restoration; the author may have been trying to make his account of these events conform with the formal procedures of association which Particular Baptists had come to adopt during the 1650s.

Several considerations, then, suggest that the special interpretative problems of no 2 originated with its author. All Stinton's transcripts are undoubtedly the authentic testimony of seventeenth century baptists, and are often consistent with other sources. The account of the troubles of the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey church during the thirties given in No 1, for example, generally agrees with material to be found in the records of Star Chamber and High Commission.³⁷ The failings of no 2 are of ambiguity rather than outright dishonesty. But the conferral of canonical status upon Stinton's transcribed MSS would be ill-advised.

However accurately Stinton reproduced his manuscripts, Thomas Crosby was not quite guiltless in producing an extra layer of inaccuracy. Despite his acquittal (perhaps the verdict should be 'not proven') of responsibility for the content of the disastrous paraphrase, he was certainly guilty of having misleadingly represented it as 'collected from' a manuscript of Kiffin, and not as the collation of that manuscript with Jessey's account in No 1 which it actually was. But Crosby was not alone in taking liberties with Stinton's transcript. Later it was discovered that the Dutch historian Brandt had alluded to the existence of Jan Batten, a leader of the Dutch Collegiants, who practiced baptism by immersion. It appeared reasonable to presume that the Batte of the transcript and this Batten were the same person. Several historians took the further liberty of presuming that Blunt received his baptism at the hands of Batten.³⁸ For many years it seemed possible that there had originally been a tilde over the 'e' of Batte, which would justify Crosby's conclusion – followed, notably by Whitsit – that 'Batten' was really the name in Stinton no 2. Burrage noticed this, and worried at it. He had not seen the 'original' Stinton transcript, and wondered if ^{it} were an inaccuracy introduced by Gould or Keymer.³⁹ The recovery of Stinton's transcript closes off this line of argument. The tilde is not there. If its absence is the

³⁷ Kilcop, *Unlimited authority* (1651) E1377(5), 14-17 (mispagination); *Burrage* 2, 311-22, Gardiner, 'Cases in Star Chamber', *Camden Soc n s* 39 (1886)

³⁸ *Crosby* 1, 302, Whitsit, *A Question*, 82, Barclay, *Inner Life* (1879) 75, Burgess, *JSSB*, 162, Scheffer, *HFCM*, 180; Newman, *History of the Baptist Churches ...*, 53.

³⁹ *Burrage* 1, 332; contradictorily, Burrage also noted the accuracy of both Gould and Keymer (*ibid* 337, 347). But in 'Restoration of Immersion', he gave Blunt's consultant as 'John Batte (Batten)', 70

result of a transcription error, Stinton, or a yet earlier copyist, made it. The alternative is that the name originally set down really was Batte, and not Batten – unless, that is, other sources can be found which confirm that a man named John Batten was the teacher with whom Blunt consulted.

There was indeed a Jan Batten, one of the founders of the Collegiant movement, which emerged from the strife inside the Dutch Reformed church in 1619. We know from Dutch sources that ‘John Batten of Leyden’ was a leader of the movement during its early days.⁴⁰ But Brandt (who published before Crosby) does not mention Blunt. Jacob van Slee, author of the most comprehensive work on the Collegiants, clearly based his brief account of the incident upon that of the great Dutch historian Jacob de Hoop Scheffer. Yet Scheffer himself seems to rely on Crosby, hingeing his account of Blunt’s visit on what he presents as a quotation from Kiffin, but which he cites from Crosby’s summary passage of ‘Stinton no 2’!! These sources all claim that Blunt was baptised by Batten, but suggest different places – Rijnsburg, Amsterdam, Leyden – for the ceremony. It seems clear that from the Dutch sources all we have is the presence of Jan Batten of Leyden in the Rijnsburg movement about 1619-20; Dutch references to Blunt do not appear to be based upon Dutch archival materials. Even a report that Batten was active in Leyden after 1630 may have been improperly deduced from van Slee’s history by putting together the fact that Jan Batten was from Leyden with another fact that a ‘college’ was founded there about 1630.⁴¹

All roads, it seems, lead back to Crosby, and through him to Stinton’s manuscript no 2, author uncertain, apparently the only primary source for the meeting of Blunt and Batte. If, as it seems, the identity of the collegiant teacher John ‘Batten’ with Blunt’s consultant rests solely upon Stinton having wrongly transcribed his name as ‘Batte’, then we must also consider the possibility that Stinton had actually mis-transcribed ‘Jo Batte’ from another similar name. I want to suggest the possibility that that name may perhaps have been ‘Tim Batte’. It must be conceded that the ‘Jo’ of the putative original is far from ‘Tim’. But it is also possible that ‘Jo’, as Stinton represented it, came from what he thought to be ‘Jno’, a common enough abbreviation, which in some scripts might appear rather like another one, ‘Tmo’. This supposition will still appear far less likely than the simple omission of a tilde, but given that one mis-transcription or other *must* be involved, it cannot be completely dismissed as a possibility.

There was a leading Baptist in the mid 1640s named Timothy Batt or Batte, a physician and lay preacher, associated in 1643 4 with Thomas Lambe, who featured in the rogue’s gallery assembled in Thomas Edwards’s *Gangraena*. It is usually said that this Timothy Batt was different from another man who became a lecturer and later minister of Ilminster, but there are compelling reasons to think that they were the same person (see Appendix A). Batte became a military chaplain in the garrison of English troops at Nijmegen. It appears that he experienced

⁴⁰ G. Brandt, *The History of the Reformation*, (Engl trans., London 1723), 49-57, reprinted by Burrage, *The Review and Expositor*, (October 1910), 526-74

⁴¹ J van Slee, *De Rijnsburg Collegianten* (1895), 380-1, Scheffer, ‘Overzicht van den geschiedenis, 167;

some trouble with the consistory of the town, and left in 1639; they later suspected that he had converted to Catholicism, (though this may have had to do with the Calvinist belief that anabaptists were tools or dupes of the Jesuits). By 21 March 1641, however, the consistory had received from Batte a letter informing them that he had become an anabaptist, and enclosing a pamphlet in support of his views.⁴² Already, it should be clear that unless there were two baptists called Timothy Batte, the Batte of Nijmegen was also the physician of Lamb's congregation.

In late 1643 Batte spoke in a public debate with Stalham and Lambe at Terling, before a 'great concourse of people'. A most suggestive feature of the account of this event is that throughout the author refers to Batte as the 'chief respondent' of two, speaking longer and more often than his associate.⁴³ Now it has always been assumed that Lambe was the pre-eminent leader of the Bell Alley congregation, but the conference at Terling suggests that at the start of 1644, Batte was at the least his equal. Perhaps, despite suspicion of university learning, Lambe was willing to concede that a man with some formal training ought to present the public face of the church; Batte did argue in syllogisms in the approved manner of the universities (and this is further reason to identify him with the graduate minister of Ilminster).⁴⁴ But this is unconvincing, given Lamb's great assurance in print and his early notoriety as an itinerant preacher. An alternative is that he recognised Batte as his senior in the faith. We do not know who baptised Lambe. There is a real possibility that it was Batte himself only a few weeks before Blunt and Blacklock's ceremony, someone re-instituted believers baptism by immersion amongst those connected with the earlier General Baptist tradition. When we add to the closeness of the time, the closeness of the names, and the absence of corroboration from Dutch sources that the consultant was named Batten, the possibility that Blunt's consultant was a man named Batte, known within two years as the senior figure amongst the 'General Baptists' of Lamb's church, may appear stronger than the oddities of Stinton's transcription appeared at first to warrant.

4 Ecclesiastical Politics on the Eve of the Civil War

In the months before the war, a widespread revulsion with the excesses of Laudian reforms, suspicion as to the motives behind them combined with rumours of popish plots, combined to lead many respectable citizens to abandon Laudian clergymen; notably in London, respectable churchwardens undermined their authority, obstructing the use of the Book of Common prayer. In September 1641, Parliament ordered the removal of statues, candlesticks and so on. Against a background of official encouragement, and under the cover of hostility or indifference to Laud's

⁴² A.Janssen & W.Meeuwissen, eds., *Kerkezaadsacten van de Nederduits Gereformeerde Gemeente te Nijmegen*, vol II, 1592-1651, (Nijmegen 1996), 235, 241, 242 Sprunger, *DP*, 349

⁴³ *Summe of a Conference at Terling ... Jan 11 1643 ..* (1644 E12(2), A2v, 2; for Lambe: *ibid* 8-9, 30-34

⁴⁴ Edward Barber thought gifted disciples should not preach by books or notes, much less by arts learned at the universities, but as the disciples of Christ': *A true discovery of the ministry of the gospel* (1645), 3

clerical followers amongst powerful parishioners, more radical spirits, and especially separatists, took the initiative in removing altar rails and destroying church ornaments.⁴⁵

On 4 December 'many hundred of citizens and Brownists flocked to Westminster, armed with swords and staves'; the trained bands were called out and many committed to prison. On Sunday 12th, there was 'a great assembly of these Brownists gathered about St George's church in Southwark, and one of their preachers, a cobbler by profession violently went into the pulpit, and made a sermon above an hour, whom they assisted until all the constables thereabouts had raised aid to suppress those tumultuous outrages'. Next, he walked 'to St Olave's church near the bridge, with all his illiterate audience after him, thinking to make another sermon.' Barred from entry, 'this preaching cobbler stood up in the Church porch and made a sermon to them all'.⁴⁶ The 'cobbler' was evidently successor to Samuel How, whose sermon preached at the Nag's Head, Coleman St, in 1639, before John Goodwin and over a hundred others, was printed soon afterwards, but who had been buried a few weeks earlier on 30 September at the Highway, Shoreditch.⁴⁷ But there is no doubt that this was How's former separatist church.

On 10 January a meeting over sixty-five strong at Richard Sturges's house at Deadmans Place, Southwark, was raided, and the leaders were detained in the Clink. On 13 January, having been 'recommended to the justice of this house by his majesty', they appeared before the Lords. On 16th the House ordered that services should be read in accordance with the law, but without ceremonies which might give offence; when the separatists appeared again two days later they were simply warned to attend their parish churches and dismissed.⁴⁸ Of the six leaders, Sturges, Edmund Chillenden, Nicholas Tyne, John Webb, Thomas Gunn, and John Ellis, three later led Baptist churches. Chillenden became an army captain and led the General Baptists at the Stone Chapel, St Paul's till his disgrace in 1653. Webb and Gunne signed the 1644 London confession.

Two other London separatist churches active in this period were led by men who became Baptists.⁴⁹ John Spencer of the separatist church at Crutched Friars in 1639 was said by Edwards to have been employed as a coachman by Robert Greville (4th Earl Brook).⁵⁰ In June 1641 he was reported to be preaching at St Paul's cross and in Hertfordshire and was one of three lay

⁴⁵ Tolmie, 46-9; Pearl, *London and the Outbreak*, 160-76; Manning, *English People*, 83-91

⁴⁶ *His Majesties Special Command* E179/19, A3; *Lucifer's Lackey* (1641) E180/3; Manning, *English People*, 93-101

⁴⁷ *The Sufficiencie of the Spirits Teaching* (1640) postscript by Kiffin, who had heard his sermons; 'The Hubbard -How-More church' [Stinton no 23], *TBHS* 2, 30-52, (*Burridge* 2, 305-7 for extracts and 328-30 for his death), *The Brownists Synagogue* (1641), E172/32, 3

⁴⁸ *Burridge* 2, 204; *LJ* 4, 133; Harl 6242, ff6-7; HMC *Buccleuch*, III, 408-9

⁴⁹ For the famous disturbance at Barbon's Fleet St church in December see *Discovery of a swarm*, [1641, E180/25; *The Brothers of the Separation* .. *Mr Porters in Goat Alley in Whitecross-Street where they were apprehended on Sunday Aug 14 1641* (1641), E172/11;

⁵⁰ *Burridge* 2, 299, 304; *Gang* III, 248-9, *Brownists Synagogue* (1641) E172/32, 5 has 'coachman', *New Preachers New*, A2r, 'groom to a stable'; Dobson, *XIV articles of treason* E94/19, 3 'horse-rubber'; *CJ* 2, 168, 170, 'horseman', Nalson, *Impartial Collections* II, 265, 'horse courser'

preachers attracting the attention of Parliament.⁵¹ He delivered a militant sermon against the official church on 28 September 1641 in Houndsditch, attacking Laud as 'a tyrannical Nimrod, a proud Pharoah' who had 'persecuted this little flock of ours'.⁵² It was surely the same John Spencer who in a sermon preached on 30 March 1642 at St Michael Crooked Lane, urged his listeners that 'few fighting soldiers' could be found in the parishes, and to seek them out 'in the congregation where you come' which might imply he was then a separatist.⁵³ Jessey's chronicle of his own church recorded the violations of the agents of the mayor or bishops, for example on 21 April 1640, 'At Tower Hill at Mrs Wilsons where some were seeking the Lord with fasting for ye Parliament (like to be dissolved unless they would grant subsidies for wars against ye Scottish)'; this gathering was apparently of 'a great number of the members of several congregations'. Soon after, on 19 May 1640 Jessey and others appeared at the Middlesex sessions, but were dismissed, 'the prosecutors thinking it not advisable to bring in any Bill of Indictment against them, as the face of affairs then stood'. On 21 August 1641, four were arrested at the house of a member, Peter Golding, in St Thomas the Apostle. Next day their meeting place was invaded by the agents of the Mayor, who 'beat, thrust, pinched and kicked such men or women as fled not his handling'. Jessey and two others were imprisoned in the Wood Street Counter, 'whereupon he with the rest of his fellows made their appeals to the Parliament then sitting by means whereof they were speedily set at liberty'.⁵⁴

By this time, of course, some of Jessey's members were believers' Baptists. The second known raid on a closed membership Baptist congregation in London in this period took place on 12 September 1641, when twenty-nine persons, including John Spilsbury of Aldersgate St, were arrested at a meeting at Radcliffe, Stepney, a long way from the city. (The venue was perhaps at or near the house of the only Radcliffe resident, Margery wife of John Porter, or perhaps at the west end of Radcliffe Highway, near the Tower). Just over a third were from St Giles without Cripplegate, and most of the rest came from the City or other northern suburbs. Only Thomas Christmas, school teacher of Watling Street, was not an artisan; there were three cordwainers, Richard Deacon of St Dunstan in the East, Matthew Cole of St Giles, Cripplegate, and George Tipping of Aldersgate St, probably an elder of the congregation, for he co-signed with Spilsbury in 1644. Edward Goreing and William Unckles, both of Chiswell Street (residence of Thomas Gunne, a 1644 leader), were also both glovers, as was John Waltham of Old Street; William Lee

⁵¹ Harleian MS 478, [John More's commons journal] 29v; *CJ* 2, 168, 170; Nalson, *ibid*.

⁵² *The Brownists Synagogue* [1641 E172/32, 5 and *The Brownists Conventicle*, E164/13, 6-7 both quote the line "none of these bishops but hath a pope in their bellies"; the former attributes it to Spencer, the latter to 'one of the elders'; these fix Spencer as the 'elder', surely of Green's church; *Tolmie*, 34-37

⁵³ Spencer, *Spiritual Warfare* E145(10), 11, Capp, *FM*, 262

⁵⁴ *Burroughes*, 300-21, Jeaffreson *MCR* III, 170; G.L.R.O., *MJ/SR* 873/49-52; *Lindley London*, 84-5, *Burroughes*, 301; [Whiston], *Life... Jessey*, 10, 11, for Golding, *Tolmie*, 40

of Little Eastcheap, St Andrew Hubbard, was a tallow chandler. The occupation of Alexander Tottame of Lombard Street, is unclear.

Of the women arrestees, Anne Gell and Anne Paule had also been amongst the seven brought together with Magdalen Spilsbury before the Court of High Commission on 23 April 1640. It seems very likely that the Anne Goreing and Grace Dickes appearing then were married or otherwise related to Edward Goreing and another Radcliffe arrestee, William Dixe, a hat-band maker of Gravel Lane, in the parish of St Botolph, Aldgate. All the fore-mentioned were from city parishes or the northern suburbs. Then there were two from Southwark, John Grove of St Mary Magdalen, leatherdresser, and Richard Dellaway, 'poind[?]maker' and two from Stepney, Thomas Cooke of White's Alley, bonesetter, and Timothy Hebourne. Finally there were three from Wapping, John Stoyand or Stoyard of Wapping might perhaps be the John Stoneard arrested with Jessey only three weeks earlier. Also appearing were John Lilburne, his wife and sister, variously given as of Stepney and of Wapping. It is hard to account for Lilburne's presence; it seems unlikely that he was a Baptist, for he recalled having been with the separatist pastor Edmund Rosier in 1644; perhaps he and one or two others were guests. The jury found that those arrested had been 'with malicious and seditious intent at Radcliffe in Stepney holding an unlawful assembly and conventicle for the exercise of religion in contempt of the laws', but it does not appear that they were punished.⁵⁵

In one remarkable pamphlet another group who would 'not go to church with Protestants' petitioned Parliament for religious toleration for all, including Socinians, Arminians, familists and others; this was a policy 'convenient for this state', and already in operation in 'divers well governed countries' including Holland, Germany and Poland. It seems likely that these were in fact Baptists.⁵⁶ However that may be, the leniency of the Lords' dealings with members of the How congregation may well have encouraged the first known political action of the Lamb church.

5 Thomas Lambe, and some early associates

Nothing is certainly known about Lambe's early life, but he may have been born in Colchester, and probably lived in the parish of St Giles, Colchester from at least October 1629, when was charged in the Archdeacon's court with non-attendance at church and failing to receive communion at Easter. On 1 July 1636, Lamb and his wife were excommunicated, having refused to attend services or have their child baptised; he is said to have also vowed 'that he would be burned before he would receive the holy sacrament after this manner'. In spring the following

⁵⁵ Lindley, *London*, 84; PRO KB9/823/113, *Burrage 1*, 327, *Burrage 2*, 301; 'poor women, schismatics, lately taken at a conventicle, the court did not think it fit to proceed against them, but left them to the secular power at quarter sessions' *CSPD 1640*, 406 [SP16/434a, f9b], a William Dixe was later a preacher in Ireland, Seymour *PI*, 210; 1657 R. Dunlop, *IUC* 671

⁵⁶ *The Humble Petition of the Brownists* (1641), E178/1, 1, 3-4

year, he was reported for 'refusing to come to divine service for a month and for not bringing his child to church to be baptised but had it baptized at home it is thought', and for 'working on his trade by boyling of sope on Sunday' 21 May. On 26 April 1638 the churchwardens testified that when they had demanded 4d towards a rate for the repair of the church, he refused with the remark that 'he did wish that all churches were laid in the dust'.⁵⁷

In November 1639, Lamb found himself in trouble with the High Commission at Lambeth. Thus far, he had not been charged in association with others. But on 6 Feb 1640, he appeared with Francis Lee, also of Colchester, perhaps the man of those names who had been a separatist there since the 1620s. Both had refused to take the oath *ex-officio*, and were committed to prison. Their keepers were instructed to 'restrain them from company, and keeping of conventicles and private exercises of religion'.⁵⁸ On 25 June, Lamb petitioned for release, since he 'had for 20 weeks last past been a prisoner lying in the Fleet by means whereof his wife and six small children were utterly deprived of their maintenance, he being by trade a weaver'; the petition was allowed, provided Lamb would confer about the legality of the oath, keep from conventicles and 'not offer to preach or baptize anie children'. The court may have been wrongly informed (and we may wonder at the change in trade), but this marks him as a separatist, and not an anti-paedobaptist. No references to Anabaptists have been found in the Essex Archdeaconry court records before 1642. Shortly after his release, Lamb evidently removed from Colchester; the last reference to him in the Act book, dated 30 July 1640, cryptically notes that Thomas Lambe, Thomas Soales, William Paul and their respective wives had 'forsaken their church'.⁵⁹

When on 15 October 1640, Lamb next appeared before the High Commission, it was with Henoeh Howet, a longstanding Baptist from Lincolnshire. A 'Thomas Sooles' was one of those with whom Lamb was arrested by justice Gibbs, at a meeting of about sixty people, in Whitechapel on 15 January 1641; eight were imprisoned. Of these there is evidence of Baptist associations for five.⁶⁰ Lambe had been arrested with Howet; John Garbrand was soon associated with a baptist group in Southwark; Mark Whitelock had been charged alongside Edward Barber of Threadneedle Street, who was almost certainly a Baptist by this time, and William Unckles and William Dixe were arrested alongside the veteran Baptist John Spilsbury and others in September 1641. This suggests that Lambe had become a Baptist before leaving Colchester, and that he, Sooles and their wives had travelled to London. In 1642, a Thomas Lambe was assessed as a soap

⁵⁷ E.R.O., D/AC/A47, f38 D/AC/A51, f122, D/AC/A52 ff17r, 93r, *ibid*, f233r.

⁵⁸ Kalu, 'The Jacobean Church and Essex Puritans' [Thesis], 315; SP 16/434 f88.

⁵⁹ SP 16/434 f221, the calendar (*CSPD 1640*, 432) omits the crucial phrase 'anie children', a fact which has led some to the opposite conclusion, that Lambe was a baptist already; E.R.O., D/AC/A54 f159v

⁶⁰ The name is certainly Sooles. In the indictment (GLRO MJ/SR 887/22) it is hard to read and the calendar rendered it as 'Seales' (Jeaffreson, *MCR* III, 113), but the man's own signature is clear (H.L.R.O. Mam Papers, 19 Jan 1641). The name 'Soales' in the Act Book is equally clear, slightly varying from Sooles. But it seems likely that 'Soales' and 'Sooles' refer to the same person. Cooksey and Stott did not sign but marked, Lambe wrote 'Stott' for the [Thomasine] 'Start' appearing in the court record.

boiler and chandler in Holywell St, Whitechapel; in that year there were two independent reports of other Baptists at or near Colchester ⁶¹

The petition may have been inspired by hopes aroused by the release of the Southwark separatists the previous day. The writing seems to match Lamb's signature. The text stressed the political loyalty and peaceable demeanour of the petitioners, contrasting it with the riotous behaviour unleashed by the forces of the law: Gibbs and his party 'had with swords, halboords and clubbs violently entered the house encouraging thereby many scores of persons to beate down our windows with stones'. The House agreed on 21 June that 'this business be left to the course of the law', and they were bailed and then released by the sessions. It is significant that the petitioners, though Baptists, succeeded in persuading several non-Baptists to stand guarantors for their good behaviour.⁶² It has been suggested, on the strength of the appearance in this case of Lambe of Whitechapel, Whitelock (an associate of the City baptist Barber), and Garbrand of Southwark, that this was a joint meeting of three distinct 'General Baptist' congregations.⁶³ And indeed, sixty is a large figure for a single congregation, at a time when care was usually taken not to attract attention; furthermore, it would indeed be strange if, in picking up only eight persons, the constables had managed to light on two stray guests from far away. On this basis it could more convincingly be deduced, that another two persons, Unckles and Dixe, both arrested in September 1641 with Spilsbury at Radcliffe, Stepney, were also not stray guests. One of those who stood surety for the Lamb group was William Lee, tallow chandler of little East Cheap, was also arrested with Spilsbury and lived very close to him. Three Spilsbury members were therefore involved. It is clear that despite all traditions retrospectively forbidding it, this joint meeting included members of the church led by John Spilsbury, probably the first of the calvinistic baptists to emerge from the London separatist tradition in the 1630s, and therefore, in the traditional lexicon, certainly a 'Particular Baptist'.

Thomas Lambe had been charged alongside Henoch Howet (who continued to baptise by affusion) in October 1640. There were many reasons why Howet might have been in London (perhaps he remained: he was of Holborn when arrested in 1643);⁶⁴ if the two men had been apprehended at the same meeting, that meeting might have been convened for any purpose. Similarly, we cannot know what was discussed at the inter-congregational gathering at

⁶¹ E.R.O., QSR 313/38, QSR 316/28 Easter 1642; Lindley, *London*. 285

⁶² H.L.R.O, Main Papers, 19 Jan 1641; MS Minute Book no 7, 21 January 1641: John Bolton goldsmith, Greg Carter glover, Thomas Speed silkman and Alan Banckes, hosier. Banckes appeared before the Commons in June for lay preaching (Harl 163 f176, Nalson Impartial Collections, II, 265), each bound in £100 (Jeaffreson *MCR* iii 113); three others, including Lee cited as sureties, Lindley, *London*, 84

⁶³ *Tolmie*, 75 presumably on the basis that a Thomas Seeles of Southwark signed a GB confession in 1660 E1017(14); Barber and Whitelock, *CSPD* 1640, 385, from SP16/434, ff 52b, 67, 81b Garbrand, 11 and 25 June 1640, *CSPD* 1640, 421 from SP16/434 f188 and *CSPD* 1640, 430 from 434, 216b; 15 October *CSPD* 1640-1, 384; from 434, f241a

⁶⁴ Howet was one of twenty nine 'recusants' of St Andrews Holborn cited for absence from church during March 1643, Jeaffreson *MRC* III, 86

Whitechapel. But it seems possible that these two meetings of different congregations had been convened specially in order to discuss the issue of immersion. This was in the air at the time; a minority had reached or were reaching the view that this was the proper means for professed believers, and others such as Jessey saw it as the right mode of baptism for infants. Stinton no 2 misleadingly conflated the two issues, but it is clear enough that they must have been linked discussions. Others outside the Jessey church may have been involved in them.

5 Edward Barber and Believers' Baptism

Edward Barber, son of William Barber, a yeoman of Sherborne, Somerset, was apprenticed on 1st July 1611 to Thomas Rephall of Finch Lane, London, and was made free of the Merchant Taylors' company on 16 August 1620. In 1638, his house in the parish of St Benet's Finke was assessed at £8 pa; an Edward Barber of this parish was in trouble with High Commission the following year; (in 1643, he issued *The Humble request* from Threadneedle street, which runs through the parish, and Edwards reported his continuing to live on that street).⁶⁵ In April 1650, Peter Chamberlen reported that he had received from Barber written testimony to the effect 'that at 2 severall times, both upon his being sent unto him by the Bishops, and one Mark Whitlocke, to be satisfied for taking the oath ex officio, Dr Gouge did acknowledge (not only sprinkling) but the baptizing of infants was a tradition of the church, and used it as one argument to take that oath.' It is impossible to conclude (as one commentator concluded) that this amounts to evidence of Barber's having accepted believers' baptism by immersion at the time of his arrest with Whitlocke.⁶⁶ The passage suggests otherwise. Surely, not even the resourceful Gouge could find a principled relationship between the mode of infant baptism and the oath. It seems he was encouraging Barber to answer questions as to his unorthodox views on the mode of baptism of infants, on the grounds that the matter was adiaphorous, and therefore not dangerous to the respondent. If this is right, it means that by January 1640, Barber had been openly questioning the mode of baptism; he had perhaps reached an immersionist standpoint before moving to restrict its application to believers. This was the road travelled (though more slowly) by Henry Jessey.

This interpretation is consistent with information in Barber's book on immersion, which is otherwise puzzling. (This work, though dated 1641, was issued after Barber's attack (1642) and included a hurried response to it). Barber was a 'late prisoner, for denying the sprinkling of infants...' (my emphasis), a choice of words which repeats exactly what Gouge is supposed to have advised him about. Of course, some will believe the emphasised formulation to signify 'upholding the baptism of believers by immersion'. But that is not what it says. Further, Barber asserted that he had been imprisoned 11 months by means whereof, I being taken of my calling,

⁶⁵ Dale, *Inhabitants*, 38, Merchant Taylors' Apprentice Bindings (Mic 315), vol 6B, 59, G-Z1, 34, Barber examined 25 June 1639, given as cloth drawer of St Bennet Fink, Bodl, Tanner 67, f 115, Gang I, 96-7.

⁶⁶ P. Chamberlen: *Mr Bakewell's sea of absurdities* (1650), 3; Christian, *BHV*, 126; Lofton, *JRKM*, 73

had more opportunity to search the scriptures daily, to see whether those things were so, not as they delivered by Paul, but practised by the priests and prelates.⁶⁷ It was as a result that Barber had embraced 'this glorious principle, true baptism or dipping, instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ', by which he meant 'Dipping, burying, or plunging a believer in water'. This signifies that he had arrived at baptism of believers by immersion during his imprisonment, and cannot therefore have been gaoled for proclaiming it beforehand. This was apparently not his only spell in prison, but it was apparently his last.⁶⁸ Another work by 'Edward Barber, sometimes prisoner in Newgate for the Gospel of Christ', suggests by the reference to the place of his earlier incarceration that Barber had not been re-imprisoned before the time of its issue probably late in 1641.⁶⁹ On the most natural reading, the preface of *A Small Treatise* refers to only one such period, of eleven months. First examined on 25 June 1639, Barber was released on exactly the same date the following year: with allowance for temporary release around Christmas before a new appearance on 23 January 1640, this gives the right term. Barber's reference to other men, less intransigent against the bishops than himself, who 'seeing the wolf coming, hid themselves, or fled beyond the seas' rather than face arrest, also suggests that this was 1639/40, rather than 1641/2, when the Bishops' authority was crumbling.⁷⁰ By the time of his release on 25 June 1640, therefore, Barber had arrived at his new views on baptism; he was surprised that God 'should amongst some others, raise up me, a poor tradesman, to divulge this glorious truth', ie as a pioneer in the matter.⁷¹ The conclusion is that Edward Barber became the first Londoner to embrace believers' baptism by immersion by about mid 1640.

It is now possible to address the problem of the dating of the Blunt/Blakelock immersion ceremony, and of the wider adoption of the custom by other Baptists. By the letter of the Stinton transcripts, as it has rightly been pointed out, the great ceremony took place in January 1642. But it seems that by this time immersion was already being practised.⁷² By winter 1641/2, Lamb was rebaptizing new recruits in the river Severn not far from Gloucester. The exact date is hard to fix; according to Wynell the earliest baptist in the area was Walter Coles, a tailor of Painswick, and

⁶⁷ P[raisegod] B[arber], *A Discourse tending* (1642), E138(23); Barber, *A Small Treatise of Baptisme*, E143/17, A2r-v, A3; Barber had received Barber's book 'when part of this treatise was in press', *ibid* 27.

⁶⁸ He mentions other imprisonments, apparently earlier, suggesting a long conflict with the authorities: 'I have formerly lain in the University of Newgate eleven months, in Kings Bench and New prison and sued in the High Commission Court, five years and in the exchequer and Common pleas, and Kings Bench....' *Certain queries propounded*, 14; he also refers to 'four years waiting at the high commission court' (*The Storming and Routing of Tithes*, (1651) 9). This suggests the courts' interest in him began c 1635/6.

⁶⁹ Christian *BHV*, 124; Whitsitt, *QBH*, 90, 114-15, 119, *To the King's most excellent majesty* 669 f4(31) (1641), apparently autumn, surely before the King's departure in January.

⁷⁰ Bodl., Tanner 67, f 115; *CSPD 1640*, 385, from SP16/434, f 52b; a year later, ordering his release, the court noted Barber's 'long imprisonment for refusing to take his oath... in this court', SP16/424, f 224

⁷¹ Barber, *A Small Treatise*, A2r, sig A3, 10.

⁷² It was reported that 'a fortnight since, a great multitude of people were met going towards the river in Hackney Marsh, and were followed to the water side, where they all were baptised again, themselves doing it to one another', *The Book of Common Prayer ... vindicated.* (1641), 8: the month of issue is not known.

one of a separatist congregation led by a Mr Wells at Whaddon. On reaching his new convictions, Coles journeyed to London, where he visited Thomas Lambe, 'your founder', and persuaded him to visit Gloucestershire with Clement Writer, (who at some point was a member of the church of either Blunt or Blacklock). Lambe preached at Cranham, and 'subverted many. And shortly after in extreme cold, and frosty time, in the night season, diverse men and women were rebaptised in the great river Severn in the city of Gloucester'. By the time Wynell decided to engage his new opponents publicly they had members at Cranham, Painswick and Gloucester. This pattern is confirmed by Richard Baxter, who was in Gloucester in the summer of 1642 and left about September: 'When I was at Gloucester I saw the first contentions between the ministers and anabaptists that ever I was acquainted with ... About a dozen young men, or more, of considerable parts, had received the opinion against infant baptism, and were rebaptised, and laboured to draw others after them, not far from Gloucester', 'the anabaptists somewhat increasing' by the time of his departure from the city in September.

The visit of Lambe and Writer evidently took place several weeks before 11 February 1642, when Lambe wrote to his Gloucestershire friends of his intention 'to go to Norwich ... about the Lord's work, as he had been with you about the like work...'⁷³ Lambe's visit could not have been much after the turn of the year. Between July and September 1641, John Taylor the Water poet went on tour in the west of England. Born in Gloucester, Taylor stayed there twice on this tour, on 2 and 11 August, and was entertained by the Mayor. The work includes a vague paragraph against sects on its last page, but is disappointingly bereft of his usual sneers at tub preachers and their laughable trades.⁷⁴ Specifically, there is no mention of baptisms in the Severn, which he seems to have rowed up and down several times, and which the Mayor of Gloucester would certainly have told him about. It therefore seems safe to conclude that Thomas Lamb had not made his appearance in Gloucestershire by September 1641. Still, Lambe's arrival by early January suggests that immersion was already in use in 1641, at least in London.

If so, either these people adopted immersion before Blunt/Blakelock's immersion ceremony, or the dating of that ceremony should be January 1641. But Praise-God Barbon had first set pen to paper in early 1642 (giving Barber enough time to reply by 24 March), in order to the correction of persons 'some of which, are my loving friends and acquaintance, whom I would not displease, but rather please'; this must refer to those who had been close to him in the church with Jessey, before it divided in 1640, and who had recently been rebaptised. However, in his second book (Td 14 April 1643), he remarked against the rejection of continental churches by 'R. Barrow' and his friends 'because they practise not total dipping; then sure it is likely, the restoration is but of two or three years standing', 'two or three years, such as is the descent of

⁷³ Wynell, *Covenant's Plea*, preface, Bv-B2r, 40, 70; Baxter RB,41; Powicke, *A Life.. Baxter*, 60-1

⁷⁴ Taylor, *John Taylor's Last Voyage .. twentieth of July last 1641, to the tenth of Sept (1641, E1100/3*

total dippers in this kingdom'.⁷⁵ This gives April 1640 to April 1641 for the first re-immersions, and must refer not to Blunt/Blacklock but to Barber or others. The January 1642 date could not in this case have been added by Stinton by deducing it from the text, so it seems most likely to be correct: an extraordinary week for Baptists, as it was for English politics, with the failed attempt to seize the five members and the departure of King Charles for the north.

6 The reinstatement of immersion and the denominational question

John Spilsbury was clearly the pioneer Baptist in the circles of Jessey, Duppa and Eaton, and had reached believers baptism before summer 1638, but he did not adopt immersion till after Blunt and Blacklock. The immersion ceremony was seen by its participants, and by the author of no 2, as of historic significance. If Spilsbury had introduced it earlier, the Blunt ceremony would have been seen (even at the time) as merely a means to re-inaugurate immersion on a rather eccentric basis, and given the fate of the two churches founded by Blunt/ Blacklock, Stinton no 2 would have awarded to it little more than a footnote. If Spilsbury had inaugurated baptism by immersion earlier, the behaviour of Blunt in scouring Europe for an administrator and then baptizing Blacklock whilst himself lacking a valid baptism, when they could have done it as consistently by walking to Aldersgate, would be simply unintelligible. But Spilsbury became an immersionist before his 1643 work advocating the practice. In it, he tells us that various persons 'beyond the seas' 'whose consciences were scrupled about the baptizing of children before they came to know what they doe in the same' had 'pressed me with Letter after Letter' to send a refutation of their detractors, 'which at length I intended to do only in a private way, until some here at home had published their evil affections in a reproachful manner'; much of this correspondence, then, had antedated the attacks of Barbon and others beginning in early 1642.⁷⁶ The book, it is revealed on its final page, was 'charged upon me, partly by such as fear the Lord in a far Country beyond the seas', which can only have been America. It may refer to the Providence group with whom Roger Williams had been baptized in 1639. Or it may refer to the individuals who later joined the group co-founded by Mark Lucar, but if so, this was before his arrival in America, for the correspondence with Spilsbury had clearly begun before the immersion ceremony at which Lucar himself was baptized. Anyway, Spilsbury had been known in America for some time as the most senior adherent of believers' baptism from whom advice might be sought. This reputation predated the institution of immersion by him only in 1642/3.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Barbon, *A Discourse tending* 1642) E138/23, pref, A2v; idem, *A reply to the frivolous* (1643) E96/20, 19, 61

⁷⁶ J Spilsbury, *A Treatise . Baptisme* (1643), epistle to reader

⁷⁷ Newman, *History of the Baptist Churches*, 84-5, 87, I. Backus, *History of the Baptists in New England*, (1777) I, 112-13, M. Edwards, 'Materials ..Baptists in Rhode Island', *RIHS* vol 6 (1867), 301-70, at 314

Others such as Lambe and Barber had antedated Blunt and Blakelock. Given their anti-successionism, Lambe and Spilsbury would not have needed to search Europe for a proper administrator (though there was also the problem of the method to be used in the ceremony). In this respect there would have been some agreement between these two scions of opposed denominations to which tradition has assigned them. In September 1641, Lamb's congregation appears to have had a joint meeting with John Spilsbury's church and perhaps with Baptists from Southwark; even if the subject was not the question of baptism by immersion, the very cooperation of these congregations, supposedly from opposed tendencies, is clearly important.

In contrast, the approval of the laying on of hands initiated in Barber's church in November 1645 was associated with a successionist outlook which he probably held earlier, in common with Blunt, Blacklock and their friends. His immediate involvement in the literary controversy suggests some kinship with Blunt's enterprise. Barber's pamphlet could be taken as signifying only that he had reached believers baptism whilst in prison, leaving the possibility that he (like Blunt and others) hesitated to institute it because of the problem of the administrator. Of course, the idea that Barber (certainly a 'General Baptist' in 1646) had anything to do with the Particular Baptist Blunt also offends against traditional historiography, and it must be admitted that there is no direct evidence for it. But there is doubt as to whether Blunt went to Holland alone: Stinton no 2 refers to him as the sole emissary, but Barbon heard of 'some, going over the sea...'. Edward Hutchinson reported that 'The great objection was the want of an Administrator, which (as I have heard) was removed by sending certain messengers to Holland', and another source also refers to 'your messengers' in the plural.)⁷⁸ Edward Barber arrived at believers' baptism by late June 1640, apparently after he had questioned the mode of infant baptism, a subject under discussion in the Jessey church in May. It seems quite unreasonable to imagine that these radicals of the London separatist-baptist milieu, who reached the need to seek believers' baptism by immersion at about the same time, were unaware of each other. Perhaps, during late 1640 and in 1641 there took place a period of discussion as to how to institute believers baptism by immersion, whether a new administrator was needed, where one might be found, should a covenant foundation be required, what should be the form of the ceremony and so on, and that such discussions began before the dispatch of an emissary or emissaries, and continued after their return – both in the two 'companies' perhaps formed from minorities in the Jessey and Spilsbury churches, and, conceivably, in others who instituted immersion in their own way and their own time.

The presence of Timothy Batte in Holland and his return to England, both at about the right time, throws more doubt upon the doubtful proposition that immersion was adopted by two mutually exclusive English denominations, by coincidence, at the same time. Batte was present in

⁷⁸ Barbon, *A Discourse tending*, E138/23, 9, E. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant and Baptism* [1676' sig A5v, *Anti-Quakerism, or a character* ..(1659).

1643-44 in the only London congregation then associated with general redemptionism. His consultative role, if such it was, provides an element whereby the restoration of immersion might be understood as a single process. It should be stressed, however, that the lack of any record in the Dutch sources is not proof that the 'Jan Batten' report is wrong, and the 'Timothy Batte' speculation is correct. The latter gives rise to problems of its own. Where, when and from whom did Timothy Batte get the baptism, if indeed it was a baptism by immersion, of which he wrote to Nijmegen in March 1641? Judging from the positions urged by Lamb, it is not likely that he was much concerned with the problem of succession; and a separatist pastor, or even a Collegiant baptizer – perhaps Jan Batten!! – might have been as good as any. At present, the only certainty – upon which it is important to insist, given the assertions to the contrary of over 250 years – is that this matter is open to doubt.

Whatever the agents and mechanics involved in the restoration of immersion during the early 1640s, other key elements of the process have remained unexplored or unresolved. First there is the wider provenance of the basic idea that Baptists could or must restore this primitive right, for whoever was the agent of its introduction in England, the practice was surely copied from someone, perhaps the Collegiants. One account suggests that English Baptists had gone as far as Silesia in their effort to find 'an administrator', presumably having heard of the (by now time honoured) Hutterite baptismal practice; we do not have contemporary descriptions of Collegiant baptisms to compare them with the earliest immersion ceremonies in England, though it appears that both took place in rivers (rather than pools or ponds), it being held symbolically important that much water should be present.⁹

Then there is the harder question of why both English and Dutch arrived at this necessity about 1619 and 1641 respectively. One explanation might focus upon features external to these very different currents. The socio-economic make-up, religious complexion and political arrangements of England were fundamentally different from those of the United Provinces. Yet in a general sense, to the Collegiants of 1619 as also to the English Baptists of 1641, the possibilities and dangers faced by godly people may not have appeared so different. In each case, it appeared, there was within their native land an aggressive and powerful agency which immediately threatened the destruction of all those who followed Christ: in Holland, the 'orthodox' Dutch Reformed leaders and in England the forces of his own orthodoxy led by Archbishop Laud (the fact that these two were in some senses opposed currents is irrelevant for the purposes of this discussion). Each had won preponderance in the national church and, with the active support of

⁹ Barbon reported that the new Baptists thought 'persons are to be dipped, all and every part to be under the water', *A Discourse tending*, 12; 'R Barrow' was for full immersion of the body, 'unto washing by dipping is necessarily required much water', *A Briefe Answer*, 10; J. Watts, *A Scribe, Pharisee*, (1657) E921(1), recalled Baptists 'who about 13 or 14 years ago, ran about the country, for they did not dip in your manner, in their clothes, but naked, nor in Ponds, but rivers', third pag, 64.

the state, each was now engaged in purging their enemies from it. The forces of antichrist seemed also to be at work, in Imperial Germany and rebellion in Ireland respectively. In politics, 1619 and 1640 brought the highest tension and historic events – in Holland the execution of Oldenbarnevelt and the expulsion of his Remonstrant allies from the ministry of the official church, in England, the calling of the Long Parliament, the fall of Strafford.

And yet amidst this turmoil, there was also great hope, for a rebirth of the true faith, for a new beginning. For some who embarked on the new way also felt the need, to proclaim it, to lay claim symbolically to the future of the true church by a ceremony which in the sight of all both washed away the stains of their formerly corrupt lives and proclaimed their death, resurrection, and new birth with Christ. The times do not provide a template for the religious views of these people, but the violence of events may help to explain why the new symbolic practice suddenly gained greater purchase amongst those who regarded them with great anxiety, yet who also dared hope that God would soon reveal a Glimpse of Zion's glory.

6 Internal discussions and external alignments, 1642-45

'General' and 'Particular' Baptists have traditionally been presented as separate branches of the same genus, like horses and zebras, on the tree of denominational evolution. It is proposed here that there unfolded a more complex process of differentiation between the Baptists. In the earliest controversy, over the foundations of the church, though the lines of division were by no means hard and fast, 'General Baptist' churches such as that of Lambe (which had not resolved its differences on the atonement) were close to the majority of those Baptists associated with the Jessey circles. But Edward Barber (later, certainly, a General Baptist) seems to have been closer to the minority, including those led by Richard Blunt and Thomas Kilcop. In a period of great instability, many Baptists moved from church to church, or became Seekers. In conservative religious circles such developments caused much concern, and from autumn 1643 the Westminster Assembly of Divines debated the means to control them. From about this point, both politics and theology began to influence far more the discussions within, and the relations between, the various baptist churches. In 1644, Lamb's church resolved a struggle within it in favour of general redemption. Meanwhile, the minority tendency amongst Calvinistic Baptists disintegrated, leaving the field clear for their opponents led by Spilsbury. Thus the churches came to align themselves more clearly in a bi-polar pattern of 'Particular' and 'General'. Amongst the latter however, there was a complication. Barber shared something of the Blunt/Kilcop outlook, but was (or soon became) a general redemptionist; his views were close to those of a group of newly converted Baptists from Kent led by Francis Cornwell, and this combination crystallised in 1645/6 into a recognisable tendency different from Lambe's

1 Ecclesiastical politics and theology 1641-42

On the eve of the civil war, Baptists were working within a political landscape transformed by the sudden collapse of the personal rule. Those around Pym thought it necessary to build a coalition which could offer a credible alternative to existing government policy; and then, after the outbreak of hostilities, an alternative to the old state. In religion, of course, there also appeared a need for cooperation for agreed ends. Probably the most important emotional bond between Parliamentarians was opposition to the high church reforms of Laud, and aggressive subordinates such as Wren at Norwich. Opposition to liturgical change was connected to suspicion of an intention to move the church towards a greater affinity with the Roman Religion, and Arminian theology was widely regarded as a means to that end.

The obvious basis on which to unite the anti-Laudians was the conformist Calvinism of George Abbot and the *status quo ante*. The Beza/Perkins tradition, long supreme in the universities of England, had been supplanted officially by the Arminian high church tendency, but it was also weakened by more liberal conceptions such as those of the circle at Great Tew. Deep changes, both in society and ideas, including tendencies towards scepticism and secularisation were at work here. Still, in theology, within the broad anti-Laudian coalition, moderate episcopalians, presbyterians and ‘orthodox’ independents generally stood for the re-installation of this conservative approach – each within his preferred ecclesial framework. Law was not just a matter of high theory; it was essential to discipline. Moderates ought to persuade more radical Independent or congregationalist allies of the need to restrain the growth of unregulated preaching, which threatened the foundations of any conceivable national church.

‘About the beginning of the second year of the sitting of the Parliament, the Presbyterian Pastors in London, and the Independents, met together, at reverend and religious Master Calamies House in Aldermanbury’; there they agreed that ‘neither side should preach, print, or dispute, or otherwise act against the others way; and this to continue till both sides in a full meeting, did declare the contrary’; a formal agreement to this effect was drawn up and signed. Another reporter adds that the independents ‘promised to join with all the rest in preaching against the Brownists, Anabaptists and other sectaries’.¹ But the sectaries were part of the anti-episcopal front, and they were sometimes unwilling to be guided by their independent near relations. Some developed theological views which challenged moderate-conservative theoretical hegemony. Amongst the least tractable, and most challenging, was the Colchester soap-boiler Thomas Lambe, now living and holding meetings in the Spitalfields area. Lambe had been in Gloucestershire in winter 1641/2 and disputed at Terling, Essex, about the end of 1643.² In between, he may have ventured to other areas under Parliamentary control, and he was also in touch with New England, but there is no doubt that London was the chief arena of his activity.³

2 A very particular General: Thomas Lamb and his troops

We know from a few books and letters something about what English Baptists were thinking up to 1631, and after 1641 there is plenty of material. In the ten years between however, there is almost nothing. We do not know how or whether existing groups in the Helwys/Murton tradition

¹¹ J.Vicars, *The Schismatic Sifted* (1646), E341(8), 15-16; W.R[athband?], *A Brief Narration of some church courses* (1644), E36 11 preface, A2

² *The Summe of a Conference at Terling ... Jan 11 1643* .[ie 1644] E12/2

³ Nathaniel Biscoe or Briscoe helped him conduct a controversy with George Phillips of Watertown (d1644): T.Lambe, *A Confutation of Infants Baptism* (1643), 1; J.Winthrop, *History of New England*, (1853) I, 370-5; G.Phillips, *A Reply to a Confutation* (1645) E287(4), 2

responded to the new conditions with any attempt to review the reasons for their isolation from other radicals. Whatever the background and reasons, it is a fact of some importance that Thomas Lamb, who was certainly a baptist by the middle of 1640, had arrived by 1642 at theological positions quite different both from those articulated in the Particular Baptists confessions of 1644 and 1646 and from those associated from 1654 with what became the mainstream of the General Baptists. He declared himself opposed both to high Calvinism, and to free-will and Arminian tenets. Surely such a fundamental reconstitution of the accepted grammar, by a self taught layman, thorough enough to stand the test of many years and many challenges, must itself have taken time and serious thought, and is unlikely to have been accomplished over a few weeks. It is possible that the basis of Lamb's ideas emerged in a baptist milieu by means of a re-examination of Arminian tenets which were helping to discredit anti-paedobaptism in the eyes of godly potential recruits. Or they may have originated through self-critical re-evaluation by a separatist of the theology which had helped chain him to a false church.

Whatever their origins, Lamb argued his positions with extraordinary persistence and skill, and never retracted or much modified them, so far as is known. He stood both for general redemption and particular election. His *Fountaine of Free Grace opened* explicitly repudiated Arminianism (a standpoint somewhat unfairly identified with 'denying original sin, holding free will, and falling away'), lamenting that its critics had weakened their case by mistakenly attacking its attachment to general redemption.⁴ Whitley found it laughable that in Crosby's History, *A Treatise of Particular Predestination* should have been 'assigned to the General Baptist!', ie Lambe.⁵ But there is no doubt that that work was written by this Lambe, that he was indeed a 'General Baptist', certain that Christ died for all mankind, but also sure there were 'those that are predestinated, and therefore effectually called, justified and glorified, but others he suffers to walk in their own ways, as the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction'. This pamphlet reflected a controversy already under way, within and beyond Lambe's church. It contained 'An Answer to A short writing, for the disproving of particular predestination made by T.S. in which answer, particular Predestination is cleared and proved by T.L.' Lambe seems to share with the Arminians an infralapsarian ordering of the decrees, a rejection of double predestination, and reliance on the concepts of foreseen faith and unbelief: 'if men were elected in Christ before the foundation of the world, then was the fall presupposed'.⁶

⁴ *Fountaine of Free Grace opened* (1645) E1181/3, Td 21 Jan; Wing continues to attribute to Saltmarsh, despite its having been issued by 'the Church of Christ in London, falsely called Anabaptists' (A2r-v), to which Saltmarsh never belonged, and despite its correct attribution (*Crosby*1, 56) over 250 years ago.

⁵ W. Whitley, *Baptist Bibliography*, vol 1, 13; *Crosby*3, 56

⁶ Lambe, *Treatise of Particular Predestination*, (1642), 2-4; T. S. might be Thomas Sooles/Soales,

It could be suggested that in affirming both general redemption and particular election, Lambe had more in common with the Calvinism of Calvin than the tradition of Beza and Perkins. This laid enormous stress upon the law, not only in its elevation of double predestination to the first place in the order of the eternal decrees, but in the importance it attached in practice to obedience to the tables of the law, in the preparatory work of justification.⁷ Lambe's rejection of this system is fully evident in 1642. He allows to all men the power to believe and the freedom to reject faith, a choice which was entirely his responsibility, for God could not offer to any man the prospect of salvation if he had fore-ordained him to destruction. But man does not appear as a co-worker with God in the working out of his own salvation; this depends entirely on the operation of free grace, irrespective of any merit of the person concerned. The implications were clearly antinomian, though Lambe did not develop them as provocatively as many others. He rejected libertine conclusions, and also stopped short of perfectionism; it was necessary for the saints to struggle against their own natures. Belief was the key but the saints' freedom from the terrors of the law required that they live a godly life: their freedom should be used in conjunction with God's purposes: activity was stressed in such phrases as 'apply ourselves unto God, in the use of those means that he hath appointed, for the working of faith in us'; 'we might wholly deny our selves, and search, and by searching find' etc.

In the *Fountain*, published in early 1645, Lambe developed more fully his ideas about free grace, and stressed also that Christ died for all men. Though less concerned to press the argument for particular election, he clearly continued to hold to it: 'his suffering for all does not necessarily enforce that he must work faith in all, he was free in the giving of himself to suffer and he is free also in quickening the souls of those he will'.⁸ Now there were others who contended for this combination of general redemptionism with free grace positions, including one of Lamb's colleagues, Henry Denne. But most of those who accepted free grace were high Calvinist antinomians. These accepted double predestination unequivocally, but also believed that God's infinite power could not be a constraint on His pleasure, which was to save truly repentant sinners through his own free grace. This act simultaneously proved the believer's prior election, from which, in turn – notwithstanding the most heinous sin – he could not fall away. Christopher Hill has noted the connection between the political challenge posed in this period to the dominion of human laws over human freedom, and the simultaneous rise of antinomianism, the theology of

Lambe's co-accused at both Colchester and Whitechapel; a second opponent, 'W', had novel ideas on the soul; this may have been Clement Writer, who accompanied Lamb in Gloucestershire in winter 1641/2 (Wynell, *Covenant Plea*, (1642), preface, B2r; Writer, 'an old wolf and a subtle man', had fallen 'to anabaptism and arminianism, and to mortalism, holding the soul mortal' *Gang* I, 81-3

⁷ R.T.Kendal, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, (1979), *passim*

⁸ [Lambe], *Fountaine*, 13, 3

the saints' freedom against the law of the Old Testament (and of bishops and synods). Contemporaries who were aware of this included Henry Denne, who thought opponents feared the liberating doctrine of free grace: 'it were better to hide this from the people, and to terrify them with hell fire, with wrath and judgment', and thus 'to keep them in bondage'.⁹ To the alarm of orthodox commentators, free grace views were becoming prevalent in the mid 1640s, particularly amongst army preachers such as John Saltmarsh. The Westminster Assembly divines petitioned against antinomian preachers as early as August 10th 1643.¹⁰

Now high calvinist antinomians opposed Lamb's general redemptionism, and his rejection of predestination to damnation. But Lambe and such men as Batt agreed that some had been elected to salvation, to be made effectual through God's free grace. Perhaps whilst Lamb was engaged in resisting those who wanted to take general redemptionism further, towards free will, the denial of original sin, and so on, Batte and perhaps others were not inclined to initiate a major dispute over the atonement, in which there were shades of opinion. For two or three years, it seems, a common adherence to free grace may have helped bridge the chasm between opposed viewpoints on the ~~eternal decree~~ ^{atonement}. Recognition of God's freedom to work his pleasure in man may have acted psychologically in the same way as did recognition of man's freedom or power to believe, and thereby through grace to attain salvation. Each could be linked theoretically to the operation of fore-ordainment from eternity, but both spoke to the convert of possibilities of the future rather than orders of the past, suggesting that the ancient bonds and shackles of the law, were to be cast off in the time of the gospel.¹¹

But fundamental issues could not remain for long unresolved. Lambe's two works of 1645-6, which concentrated on the atonement, were the fruit of internal disputes, first with Batte, and then with Benjamin Coxe (1595-c1664). Coxe was an ordained minister, lecturer at Barnstaple from about 1620 to 1627, and later curate at Sampford Peverill, Devon, where he may have contacted the Tiverton Baptists. Returning to Barnstaple in 1640, he developed scruples over the administration of communion. In July 1642, Coxe was still in the established church, but was preaching to a group of his own.¹² It is clear that he was soon convinced of general redemption. For, on removing to London he searched out the man 'who made the book of Christ's dying for

⁹ Hill, 'Antinomianism in 17th century England', in his *Religion and Politics*, (1986), 162-84, at 168

¹ [Lambe], *Fountaine*, 3; Paul, Assembly 176-7; G.Huehns, *Antinomianism in English History*; for Saltmarsh, L.Solt, *Saints in Arms*, 8, 33, 38-40, 61-5 etc; Morton, *World of the Ranters*, 45-69; G-Z3 136-7; Baillie2 117, 140, 157, 169, 191-2, 211-2.

¹¹ For many antinomians, the immediate prospect of Christ's return to earth to rule with his saints, signalled most powerfully the end of the rule of necessity and the beginning of freedom.

¹² For Coxe see my article in *NDNB*; Blake, *The Great Question* (1645), E301/1, preface, sig A3-C3v, 1-2, 22-3, 75-6, 121; Baxter (*PSP*, 145, 147) suggested Coxe became a Baptist before he embraced separatism.

all, and God's election only of some, and commended it, which you said you had seen in your own country before you came to the church' (ie *A Treatise of Particular Predestination*). Probably in winter 1642/3 Coxe was baptised into Lambe's church, and became 'a profitable instrument' of it.¹³ (The church may still have been meeting at Whitechapel in March 1643, since a probable member was Nicholas Tew 'the Girdler at the exchange, who teacheth at Whitechapel at a chamber every sabboth day').¹⁴ Next summer, Coxe was sent to the Parliamentary town of Coventry, home to one of the five Baptist churches of the 1620s. It must have survived, because Baxter informs us rather grudgingly that 'the garrison and city of Coventry ... was almost free from them when I came thither' (c November 1642), noting that Coxe was 'sent from London to confirm them' (ie perhaps to correct heterodox opinions, but not to found a new church).¹⁵ At Coventry, Coxe encountered not only Baxter, with whom he disputed, but also free-willers (in the church or perhaps in the garrison). Such views had developed also in the London church: perhaps he began to wonder whether general redemption necessarily led its adherents to Pelagianism.¹⁶

Having been expelled from Coventry, Coxe returned to London, but he went back a second time, about spring or early summer 1644 and was shortly imprisoned for outspoken criticism of the established church.¹⁷ It was during this second absence that the argument between Lambe and Batte erupted. Stalham concluded from the conference at Terling that 'the great difference now in this kingdom, consists of two things: of the Doctrine of Baptism; and of Free Grace', and on this his opponents could agree. But already, as he reported, there were disagreements between them over the question of the status of infants, which suggest deep-seated differences.¹⁸ Nothing is known of the progress of the argument. But its outcome was the seventeen point confession of faith, each beginning 'we believe that ...', which Batt appended to a work of 1644, in which Christ's sacrifice appears as 'an eternal price and ransom to his father in the behalf of his church and peculiar'. This surely represents the manifesto of himself and his faction.¹⁹ According to Lambe, when Coxe returned once more to London 'Master Batt had broken the church in pieces'.

¹³ Lamb, *Christ Crucified: A propitiation for the sins of all men, cleared and vindicated. Against Ben: Cox his answer to three questions formerly made* (1646), sig A3r, refers to 'the second time you taught in the church, after you were baptised'; Coxe's membership of Lambe's church is established here, a fact reported by Ruth Clifford nee Butterfield in 'The General Baptists 1640-60' [Oxford 1991], 53. I am extremely grateful to Ruth Clifford for letting me see her copy of this important pamphlet.

¹⁴ Dobson, *XIV articles of treason* E94/19, Td March 30 1643

¹⁵ Baxter, *PSP*, Preface; Sylvester, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), 46; Powicke, *Life... Baxter*, 60-3; for Whitley, ('Benjamin Coxe', *BQ* 6 (1932), 50-59), Baxter's formulation was 'curious' since it conflicted with his view that Coxe was founding a Particular church, a view reaffirmed by B.R White, *G-ZI*, 184-5.

¹⁶ B Cox, *Some Mistaken Scriptures sincerely explained. In answer to one infected with some pelagian errors. Written by Benjamin Cox when he was first prisoner in Coventrie. Now published* (1646).

¹⁷ 4 July 1644, D.W.L., Baxter Letters, I, 35; perhaps sent to Coxe in prison at Coventry (*K-NI*, 40-1).

¹⁸ *Summe of a Conference at Terling* E12(2), 2, 32-35; Batt, *A Treatise concerning the Free Grace* (1643)

¹⁹ *Christ's Gracious Message* (1644) 'by Timothy Batt, physician', 187-202 at 193

At this time, when Batte was trying ‘to draw all after him from the truth into error, and from the Church into faction; you to reduce him said unto him, “if you deny that Christ died for the sins of all, what Gospel will you preach to unbelievers?”’²⁰ So Coxe was then a general redemptionist in Lambe’s own kind.

Soon, however, the pupil revolted against the teacher. It is clear that a second sharp argument now took place inside the congregation. Coxe began to urge limited atonement whilst still a member; Lambe issued three questions opposing him, designed for private circulation within the church. To this, Coxe, replied in a printed work: ‘raising a faction both in city and country’.²¹ Lamb caustically remarked upon his opponent’s use of ‘we and us’, ‘whereas I find none speaking but this man: he seems to me to speak imperially in the plural number’, demanding more than once to know who he was speaking for. Lamb knew, since his own work (dated 1646) came after Cox’s first public identification with the Particular Baptists in December 1645. But he was angry at that Coxe was negotiating with the Particular leaders whilst still a member.²² Lamb accused Coxe not only of ‘withdrawing from the church of God’, but also of abandoning the faith into which he had been baptized, but as we shall see, this cannot have been a condition of membership. Stalham was clear that universal redemption had not been preached at Terling in 1643, but was first brought by Samuel Oates in spring 1646.²³

Christ Crucified was an attack upon both those who rejected general redemption, and also on an opposite tendency, those who took it to mean that all would be saved. Its central contention, that that Christ died for all men, is forcefully defended: for believers the proposition stands as the only certain ground of assurance of their faith in his having died for them; for reprobates it serves as the only secure basis for the justice of their punishment by God. This was an ideology of evangelism. Universal atonement was not only a truth, but a truth which it was essential to preach to all men: ‘Christ hath appointed a gospel of remission of sins by this death to be preached to the world, to the begetting of persons to the faith of that truth’ (my emphasis), to be preached ‘For the working of the belief thereof in all, in whom the doctrine prevaileth, and for the inexcusableness of the rest.’ Thus, general redemptionism played a crucial operational role for the church, underpinning its own responsibility and desire, through grace, to preach the gospel to all men. The importance of preaching is repeatedly pressed, and the consequences of rejecting its message

²⁰ Lamb, *Christ Crucified*, A4r. I have added the double quotes, which reflect the sense of the passage

²¹ Ibid, A2r, A3r, Coxe’s work, not extant, written between July 1644 and November 1645, but spring 1645 is a fair guess. *The Summe .. Terling* was 11 January 1644, so the Batt dispute was probably soon after.

²² Lamb, *Christ Crucified*: A2r-A3r, questions at A6r, A7v, Br, Coxe, Knollys, Kiffin, *A Declaration .. Aldermanbury 3rd Dec 1645* (1645), E313(22).

²³ For J. Stalham, *Vindiciae Redemptionis...* Oates (1647) E384/10, Td April 17, general redemption was ‘the bait which the fisher brought near a twelve-month since’ preface, A3

are starkly registered: 'he that believeth not his own justice and life in the death of Christ shall never see light: but the wrath of God abideth on him...' 'by it [faith] only do we partake of Christs death and suffering'.

By the time of the appearance of the *Fountaine*, it seems this was a condition of membership. The *Fountaine* is signed in the preface by 'the church of Christ in London' (indicating that it did not consider Barber's to qualify). It set out a newly agreed orthodoxy. When the work was re-issued in 1648, it included decisive confirmation that confessional orthodoxy had not been demanded in the early years of the congregation: for to it was appended a new statement of faith titled: Six Propositions for doctrine agreed on as a necessary foundation without which we at first did not begin the practice of baptism (my emphasis).²⁴ These were, 'First that Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom for all men. Second that remission of sins ought to be preached to all men. Third that every one ought to believe the forgiveness of his sins through Jesus Christ. Fourth that no man hath power by nature to believe in Christ. Fifth that nothing can be done by us to cause God to choose us. Sixth that whoseover hath precious faith are elected by the power of God to salvation.' The six propositions are the clear footprints of the dispute of 1644, indicating the main areas in which common ground had been established against challenge, the first three against high calvinists, as set out by Batte's manifesto of 1644; the rest against free-willers.²⁵

In May 1644, Lambe debated with a Familist, John Etherington, but 'hastened away, because many people staid at his house, as they said, to hear him preach that evening'. Perhaps Benjamin Coxe had become alarmed not only at theological novelties spreading in and around Lamb's congregation (notably the discussion on the nature of the soul in 1642) and in Coventry, and had realised that defying authority had become the province not only of respectable ministers such as himself, but of humbler laymen with extremely heterodox opinions. Such factors may have contributed to his decision to re-examine the question of the atonement.²⁶ He abandoned the Lamb congregation just about the time when it welcomed the notorious Samuel Oates, and now associated himself with John Spilsbury, a man highly conservative in his theological calvinism,

²⁴ [Lambe], *Fountaine*, 17, 19, 23, idem *Christ Crucified*, passim and esp B-B2v. [Lambe], *Fountaine* (1648), 26; Lambe had exaggerated Cox's renegacy by adding to it the odium of abandoning an agreed basis of faith, which had not actually been enforced till after his departure.

²⁵ *Christ's Gracious Message* (1644) 'by Timothy Batt, physician', 187-202; Edwards reported (Gang I, 93) that 'there's sometimes difference in the Ch who will exercise next, tis put to the vote, some for one, some for another, some for Brother Tench, some for Brother Bat, some for Brother Oats sometimes upon some standing up and objecting there's pro and con for almost an hour'. The open policy of the Lamb congregation attracted crowds, and may have 'rivalled the theatre' in this respect (*Tolmie*, 76). But was it comedy? Edwards may have been describing a serious faction fight.

²⁶ I.E., *The Anabaptists Groundwork* (1644) A2v; Stalham was questioned about Lamb and Batt by the county committee at Chelmsford, *Summe.. Terling* E12(2), sig A2

and William Kiffin, the most cautious of the leaders of the Particular Baptists. These two now enlisted Coxe as chief defender of the second edition of their confession.

3 William Kiffin and John Spilsbury

It has been shown that Kiffin was a member of Samuel Eaton's church from 1638, becoming its leader after his death.²⁷ However, Crosby suggested that Kiffin 'joined himself to the church of Mr John Spilsbury; but a difference arising about permitting people to preach among them, that had not been baptized by immersion, they parted by consent, yet kept a good correspondence'.

Crosby's first claim here is that Kiffin adhered to Spilsbury's church. This probably originated in his disastrous printed conflation of no 1 and no 2: 'In the same year 1639, Mr William Kiffin, Mr Thomas Wilson and others, being of the same judgement, were upon their request dismissed to the said Mr Spilsbury's congregation'.²⁸ It is not quite impossible that Crosby had another source showing Kiffin as a member with Spilsbury, but all the surviving evidence is against this. In June 1638, Spilsbury was leading a Baptist congregation, to which six people joined in that month. But Kiffin did not become a Baptist until at least late 1641:- in the preface to Thomas Goodwin's *A Glympse of Sion's Glory* Kiffin referred to the true church as 'a company of saints in a congregational way'. The main text contained vivid eschatology and radical ideas about the role of the common people in founding a godly commonwealth, but if he wanted to reach a wide audience of puritans, Goodwin would not have invited a Baptist to write his preface. Featley's allusions to Kiffin's uncertainty about believers' baptism may not be reliable, but they suggest that in 1642 he was new in the ranks. The possibility that Kiffin joined Spilsbury after his rebaptism conflicts both with the Broadmead report that he had his own church in 1643, and also with his autobiography in involving two changes of congregation.²⁹ Therefore Crosby's first claim must be rejected as very unlikely.

But Crosby also claimed, secondly, that Kiffin and Spilsbury had disagreed on the question of un-immersed preachers, and that this led to Kiffin's leaving Spilsbury's church. Now it seems clear that Kiffin's joining, and therefore his leaving, originated in the garbled paraphrase. Crosby had Kiffin joining Spilsbury in 1638, but he also knew that Kiffin and Spilsbury had signed for different churches in 1644. He used the disagreement to provide a plausible explanation for Kiffin's 'departure'. Yet his account of the disagreement is too specific to be a mere invention, and it also fits well with what we know about Spilsbury's attitude to such matters.

²⁷ This position argued in B.R. White, 'How did William Kiffin', *BQ* 23, (1969-70), 201-7; Orme, *RP*, 14.

²⁸ *Crosby* 3, 4; *Crosby* I, 149 cited, B. White, 'Baptist Beginnings', *BHH*, 1, January 1967, 27-37 at 29

²⁹ T. Goodwin, *A Glympse of Sion's Glory*, preface, 1-2, 4; for his authorship, J. Wilson 'A Glimpse...', *Church History* 31 [1962], 67-73; Featley, *The Dippers dipt* (1645), E268(11), 1-5, 17; *Broadmead*, 98

It seems that in the 1630s, as leader of a group of separatists who had left their mother church on the basis of believers' baptism, Spilsbury had taken responsibility for baptising his followers whilst still himself unbaptised. When he introduced immersion of baptised believers in his church, he did it along similar lines. Having been baptised (perhaps by an elder) by affusion, he now re-baptised his followers by immersion, taking responsibility for this second innovation, just as he had for the first, on behalf of the church, a body sufficiently legitimate to delegate him to inaugurate the new practice. During these early days in London, the baptists were growing rapidly, and there was a need for officers. For leaders such as Kiffin, it was important to show allies that the Baptists were not to be identified with the insurgents of Munster, and to combat their image in the pamphlet press as a rabble of lower class tub preachers with exotic views and disorderly practices: they should be seen to be founded in what he took to be an orderly fashion by one who had himself been immersed.

Spilsbury, however, simply did not think baptism as fundamental in the foundation of the church as did the other Particular Baptist leaders of 1644. He could not submit on this matter, not only because it cut against the grain of his view that the covenanted collective was more fundamental than baptism in constituting the church, but also because he himself had not been immersed before re-re-baptising his followers by immersion. Had he acceded to Kiffin's view, Spilsbury would have been calling into question the foundation of his own church. So Crosby's claim may well be correct. The pastor might have been Thomas Gunne, signatory with John Mabbett in 1644. Gunne had been arrested with Chillenden and others in January 1641, whilst apparently still a separatist, but by May 1643, when he was arrested with Margery Webb for holding a conventicle, he may have been head of a baptist church.³⁰ Another possibility is Paul Hobson. It is even conceivable that Spilsbury refused to immerse Kiffin himself, because he saw it as Kiffin's own responsibility as leader of his church. Meanwhile, the organisations founded at the time of the great immersion ceremony were in serious trouble.

4 The Controversy over Succession.

In 1681, Francis Bampfield had been told by 'two yet alive in this city of London, who were members of the first church of Baptised believers here, that their first administrator was one who baptised himself, or else he and another baptised each other, and so gathered a church'. As the phrase 'or else' suggests, Bampfield's formulation is reconstructed in Stinton no 2: 'Mr Blunt Baptized Mr Blacklock yt was a teacher amongst them, & Mr Blunt being Baptized, he & Mr

³⁰ B L. Harl 6242, ff6-7; *LJ* 4, 134 features John Webb, probably co-signatory with Kilcop in October 1644 and later an army lieutenant; Lindley, *London*, 82; PRO, KB 9/832/13 gives Gunne as of Chiswell Street (St Giles Cripplegate) also home to Spilsbury members Unckles and Goreing (PRO KB 9 823/113).

Blacklock Baptized the rest of their friends'.³¹ However, this does not exclude the possibility that Blunt had been unbaptised when he began. 'R. Barrow' explicitly defended the reinauguration of immersion by an unbaptised administrator: 'as at first, John the Baptist, at the command of God, baptised others, though he himself was unbaptised, even so now... in the like case of necessity'.³²

In his first book, Barbon referred variously to an unbaptised and self baptised administrator, and it is not at all clear to whom he was referring.³³ Nathaniel Homes and Barber also make reference to self-baptisms, but may not refer to Blunt.³⁴ The clearest information comes from Barbon's reply to 'R. Barrow', which there is reason to think was a pseudonym of Richard Blunt.³⁵ R.B., says Barbon, was 'confident of his first baptism, certainly of his second he was so, nothing might be spoken against them... and now this his third it is the only truth, which none may speak against', adopted 'within these two or three years'. So R.B. had undergone believers baptism by affusion, and then recently by immersion. He was also the pastor of a church: 'some of the members of RB church' 'RB saith for himself and the rest with him'.³⁶ He can surely be none other than Richard Blunt. But Barbon also strongly implies that immersion was reintroduced by other churches at about the same time, or a little before, that of R.B. He reports 'two or three [churches] excepted that have within these two or three years, or some such short time, been totally dipped for baptism, by persons at the beginning unbaptised themselves'.³⁷

Blunt and Blacklock, who could discover no true baptized church in the world, opted, in the face of total apostacy, for rebaptism by an unbaptised administrator, but seem simultaneously to have signalled their deep discomfort with this by baptizing each other; both the essential incoherence of the act, and of the position on which it was based (both earlier discovered by John

³¹ F.Bampfield, *An Historical Declaration* (1681), 16; *Burrage* 1, 333

³² R.Barrow, *A Briefe Answer*, 7; *Crosby* 1, 97.

³³ Barbon refers twice to a self baptism (*Discourse* 9, 11), but also says the new Baptists thought Christ's power devolved to 'persons unbaptised', 'and thereupon do ground their proceedings' (ibid 7 recte 5). Burrage took these as references to the uncertainties of Blunt/Blacklock (ROI, 79). Barbon did refer to these opponents as 'new', but seems to have meant affusionist baptists (Smyth, Helwys, Spilsbury), for he then refers to those who had 'very lately' concluded 'that persons are to be dipped, all and every part to be under the water' ibid 12, stressing that 'this is a very new way' whose 'settling is not yet known' ibid 15

³⁴ N. Homes, *A Vindication of Baptizing .. Mr Tombes*. (1646), 81; Barber, *STBD*, E143/17, 27-8

³⁵ R.Barrow, *A Briefe Answer to a discourse lately Written by one P.B.* filmed from the Union Theological Seminary NY copy, Micro MicB56/10(24), 'R. Barrow' is printed, and 'obert' added in MS by a later hand, perhaps in the belief that it ~~had to be~~ the Irish colonel of that name. Radical authors (including Barbon) were still using pseudonyms or initials in early 1642; Blunt might have been claiming spiritual descent from Henry Barrow, whose church supplied much of the Particular Baptists' 1644 confession; to pose thus as a more consistent separatist than Barbon, still apparently a member of the church of England, was certain to irritate him; the reply refers throughout not to 'R.Barrow', but to 'R.B.' *Tolmie* 54-5 may be right to identify Barrow as author of *A Brief Answer to R.H.* (1646, E357/2), but see Appendix B.

³⁶ Barbon, *A reply to the frivolous E96/20*, to reader [3], 5, 50-1, 30-1; R.Barrow, *A Briefe Answer* has many references to a collective 'we'.

³⁷ Barbon, *A reply*, 18-19, 30-31, 15,

Smyth), made it impossible to determine who was now entitled to baptise. For most of those who had been in 'companies' rather than 'congregations', the ceremony (not a covenant, as Stinton no 2 made clear) represented the foundation stone of the church in which they later congregated: as Kilcop recalled it, 'we by the aforesaid ministry were converted, and were also baptized, before we congregated.'³⁸ The legitimacy of the initial baptism was therefore both crucial and dubious, and it was very soon exposed to challenge. Spilisbury published his book on baptism, partly because of those who were 'in a resemblance of the truth, going on in such a confused way, both in respect of corrupt doctrine and as bad order; by reason of such disorder, the blessed name of God, and his holy truth are exposed unto much suffering.'³⁹ By the time of Barbon's reply (Td 14 April 1643), the view that the church was 'not to be found in the world' was causing problems: it was 'no marvel they be no more stable, and settled, but still in their changes'. Many reached the Seeker view that the lost ordinance could only be restored in the era of the return of Christ, when new apostles would appear, with the extraordinary and miraculous powers of their predecessors; such ideas fitted well with the increasingly apocalyptic mood. And so the church, wrote Bampfield, was 'so opposed in public and in private, that they were disputed out of their church-state and constitution, out of their call to office; that not being able to justify their principle and practice by the word, they were broken and scattered...' The occurrence of 'Bro Blunt' (if this is Richard), as one of those in Jessey's congregation who left for Kiffin's congregation in spring 1644 suggests either a rapid disintegration or his early egress from his own church. At any rate, before June 1646, Blunt's church 'broke into peeces, and some went one way, some another, divers fell off to no church at all'.⁴⁰

It cannot be assumed that the members of the Blunt/Blacklock churches thought baptism had to pass through ordination, or it was without warrant in the scriptural sense. They started anew, despite the 'defection of antichrist', but they made much of the vanishing of the ordinance from the world. For the Seekers who emerged amongst them, this made an insuperable difficulty for the foundation of orderly churches. From this angle, each person, on receiving his baptism, was individually received into membership with Christ, the head of his church; baptism itself was the basis of the church, and if no baptism, no church. The common ground between these Baptists and the Seekers was both a matter of history and similarity of outlook.⁴¹ This was one of the standpoints sharply criticised by Spilisbury. He accepted that the visible church of Christ could be

³⁸ Kilcop, *Unlimited authority*, (1651) E1377/5, 17

³⁹ J.S[pilisbury] *A Treatise ... of Baptisme* (1643) Epistle to Reader, A3.

⁴⁰ *TBHS* I, 243, *Gang* III, 113

⁴¹ They continued to relate to the Seeker milieu: Kilcop, *Unlimited authority* (1651) E1377(5) replied to [J. Jackson?], *A Sober Word* (1651), E620(6);

and had been destroyed for a time by persecution, but in its scriptural foundations, a true church 'which once was in such a way of being and ceaseth for a time, and then comes to the same estate again is, and may truly be said, to have ever a continuance ... she shall never be so prevailed against as to be utterly destroyed'. For him these scriptural principles, and not the ordinance of baptism, were the indestructible foundations of the true church.

Spilisbury distinguished two currents of which he disapproved, amongst those recently re-baptised: 'first such as stand for a personall succession; secondly, such as will have no church before Baptism, and so make Baptism the form of the church'. To the latter, such as Kilcop, his response was measured: 'the covenant is that by which God owns a people for his and they him for their god, therefore the covenant is the form' even 'before ever any ordinance was annexed', and acknowledgment of the truth of baptism was an essential part of the covenant. But he was very hostile to the successionists: to hold 'personal succession', despite centuries of false churches which maintained it, and then to set up a new one was 'a mere schism'; and 'to dream of any approved church by the word of God, in or under this defection and yet a part of the same is to look for a man in the moon'. Spilisbury saw no problem in restoring the ordinance. An unbaptised administrator could act, like himself, on the authority of the covenanted congregation. He was against self-baptism: 'for a man to baptize himself', 'I do not approve of' the practice. But he far preferred it to successionism, which was 'to shut up the ordinance of God in such a strait, that none can come by it, but through the authority of the Popedome of Rome'. In fine, 'There is no succession under the New Testament but what is spiritually by faith in the Word of God'.⁴²

Open Baptist advocacy of successionism has not been discovered in the extant literature of the early 1640s, but it was mentioned by Barbone as a tendency with which R.B. disagreed. Such views were certainly held by John Spittlehouse ten years later in a book issued against the Seeker John Brayne. For Spittlehouse it was not necessary 'to prove that the aforesaid primitive church was so preserved... It is enough for me to prove that it was only to be hid, and so hid from the face of the dragon'.⁴³ Just such denials that the ordinance had ever been erased from the world had been characterised by Spilisbury as a search for the man in the moon. Though dividing his opponents into two for the purposes of debate, he saw them as essentially similar in outlook: 'I fear men put more in baptism then is of right due unto it, that so prefer it above the Church, and all other ordinances besides, for they can assume or erect a church, take in and cast out members, elect and ordain officers, and administer the supper, and all anew, without any looking after succession, any further than the scriptures; but as for baptism, they must have that successively

⁴² Spilisbury, *Treatise*, 39-41. Contents

⁴³ Barbone *A reply*, E96/20, 19; J. Spittlehouse & J. More, *A Vindication of the Continued Succession of the Primitive Church* (1652), 30

from the apostles, though it comes through the hands of Pope Joan.' Most Baptist opponents of the Blunt/Blacklock churches felt the same. Crosby summed up the dominant response (probably conveyed by Kiffin, Adams and Stinton): 'But the greatest number of the English baptists, and the more judicious, looked upon all this as needless trouble, and what proceeded from the old popish doctrine of the right to administer ordinances by an uninterrupted succession'.

Spilisbury thought the church should be founded in stages: 'First the word of God, fitting and preparing of the matter ... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' Second came 'the confession of faith, which declares the fitness of the manner for the form', and third, 'the Spirit of grace and power going forth in their hearts by faith, uniting and knitting them up together as one ... and so consequently into an orderly body among themselves'; only then was baptism inaugurated.⁴⁴ Now Thomas Lambe agreed that 'the true visible church of the New testament constituted by the baptism of believers, by which they have visible participation cannot be removed, dissolved, ceased or taken away'. And he also set out a foundation in stages: 'neither baptism nor a covenant is the form of the church, but baptism of believers is the instrumental means by which the Church ... comes to be a church and to have such a name settled on it'. This means is 'by consent of love, issuing forth from the covenant of grace made in [sic] from one Lord, through one spirit, one faith one baptism, and if any one of these means by wanting... the church can have no visible existence or being.'

However, the covenant of grace referred to by Lambe was quite different from the 'company of believers acting a covenant to become one another's amongst themselves' of Spilisbury; for Lamb, 'neither is there any warrant that God hath appointed men to all any [sic] such covenant for such end and therefore so to do is will worship, vanity, the invention of man, and mens inventions in Gods worship are plain superstitious'. In his account of the process of church foundation, Lamb placed greater emphasis on the last stage, but he argued it subtly: since 'an adjunct may be a means of forming and constituting of the thing to which it is adjoined: so baptism being administered upon believers may be a means to constitute and form them into a true visible church state'. The adjunct, though decisive, was still an adjunct! Now we do not know the positions of the other Particular Baptist leaders, but Spilisbury's reported disagreement with Kiffin probably stemmed from his view that men often 'placed too much in baptism'; he was unique in placing a formal covenant so firmly in the first place in the ordering of the church; they were unwilling to do this.⁴⁵ It appears there was common ground in the matter of church-foundation between the anti-successionist Particular Baptists and that of Thomas Lambe.

⁴⁴ Crosby1, 103; Spilisbury, *Treatise*, 40. 43.

⁴⁵ Lamb, *A Confutation of Infants Baptism*, (1643) 48, 35, 37, 40, 42-3, 36

Edward Barber's views are harder to characterise. He was evidently unhappy with the means used by Blunt and friends to reinaugurate immersion. In an obscure, ambiguous (and most eccentrically punctuated) passage, he seems to defend the practice of self-baptism. The argument seems to involve an implicit successionism, and makes baptism the form of the church: baptized persons are 'buried with Christ in baptism, wherein also they were risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, which was by regeneration, and not generation'. God comes to them 'as a living stone, elect and precious; they as living stones, are built up, a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.'⁴⁶ In 1645 he wrote of 'apostles or messengers; the master builders, or layers of the foundation... usually said to be extraordinary or ceased.... you shall find it to be an extraordinary deceit, that thereby they [ie the priests] may uphold the ministry of antichrist'.⁴⁷ Barber probably adopted Kilcop's practice, building the church from baptised individuals and makes no mention of a foundation set up initially by a coming together of people in a group (as do Lambe and Spilsbury).

Within the complex of views associated with Blunt, Blacklock, Spittlehouse and Barber, there were undoubtedly important differences. But their broad approach and style bears a strong family resemblance to the successionism of John Smyth. Equally, several of Spilsbury's more acidic remarks, which linked 'personal succession' with the 'Popedome of Rome', could be lifted straight from the choleric pages of Helwys's *Advertisement* against Smyth and the Mennonites. In the broadest terms, Spilsbury, Lamb and Kiffin here lined up against Barber, Blunt and Kilcop! We know little of these disputes, which took place largely behind closed doors; Baptists did not to want opponents to take advantage of their disagreements. Nevertheless it is clear that the dispute aroused real bitterness. Spilsbury closed his argument with an outstandingly vituperative attack on opponents, who 'have so wide mouths open against such as ever wished them well; but I leave them to God, to whom they shall give account of all their harsh words against the Lord and those that fear his name, and out of conscience obey him in that way, as some please to call error, in a reproachful way ... such men can be little better minded, that labour so to cover the godly with such filth, as they vomit out of their own self sick stomachs; but I desire the Lord to pass by all, and to give men more love and patience to bear with one another.' Exactly so!⁴⁸

5 The further evolution of Edward Barber

The foregoing suggests that those later known later as General or Particular Baptists cannot be assumed to have felt any such denominational allegiance up to October 1644. Edward Barber's is

⁴⁶ Barber, *STBD*, E143/17 27-8, 29

⁴⁷ Barber, *A true discovery of the ministry* (1645), 2

⁴⁸ Barbon, *RFLA*, E96/20, 55; Spilsbury, *Treatise*, 40

a case in point. From 12 November 1645, his church certainly adopted the practice, later common amongst General Baptists, of the laying on of hands.⁴⁹ On this basis it has been assumed that Barber had been a 'General Baptist' from 1640 or even earlier. Certainly he was leading a church. His first printed work, (probably late 1641), was *The humble petition of many his majesties loyall and faithfull subjects..., practising nothing but that which was instituted by the Lord Jesus...* His pamphlet (early 1642) asks whether, 'there be any that from the word of God can shew that we walk in a false way'. In early 1643, Barbon referred to 'all of EB his church', strongly implying that his opponent led it.⁵⁰ In November 1645, when Lambe was repeatedly reported to be meeting at Bell Alley, 'the church of one Barber' met in 'a great house in Bishopsgate street'; Edwards associates Denne, Oates and others with Lambe – but never Barber.⁵¹ It seems then that in this period, Barber was already leading an independent congregation, on the basis of commitment to baptism of believers by immersion, and he was not, as has been suggested, a member with Lambe who broke with him over the laying on of hands.⁵²

The only credible evidence that Barber and his group were before 1645 linked to the tradition of the General Baptists consists of his disavowal, following Helwys, of fleeing persecution.⁵³ It is true that his co-accused Mark Whitelocke was arrested with Thomas Lambe in January 1641, but since Unckles and Dixe, probably two Spilsbury members were arrested at the same meeting, this is hardly decisive.⁵⁴ Barber was not a member of the Jessey church and does not appear in the Stinton repository. Yet he was in trouble with High Commission before his conversion to believers' baptism by immersion, and it seems probable that he was a separatist at the time. Barbon refers to an organisation in which Barber had been a member before joining his present church: 'how dare he separate from the church he was left a member of, for which he was dealt withal by them, he may resolve the case himself.' This was clearly a gathered congregation of some sort, perhaps separatist rather than Baptist. Barber himself demanded of the separatists as a fellow spirit that they 'separate for corruptions'.⁵⁵ He was one of only five early Baptist

⁴⁹ Gang I, 104-05; Barber's injunction in *A true discovery*, 4: 'beware of the laying on of hands suddenly on any man' refers to ordinands (the subject of the biblical reference).

⁵⁰ Barber, *A Small Treatise* (1641) E143/17, sig A3; Barbon *A reply to the frivolous*, E 96/20), 59.

⁵¹ Gang I, 76, 77, 92; Gang I, 104; 'a large house of Bishopsgate' would suggest to contemporary readers the southern, city stretch of that road, ie near Barber's house at Threadneedle St. The Spital, or Spital yard, was at the northern end of Bishopsgate Street Without the wall, where it merged into Norton Fallgate. Had Edwards meant this, he would have said 'the Spital Bishopsgate', as in his report of the mortalism debate.

⁵² Apparently this view is 'generally believed': White, *EB17* (1996) 30; see below, section 8.

⁵³ Barber, *A true discovery* (1645), 8; idem *STB*, (E143/17), sig A2v

⁵⁴ The designation of Unckles and Dixe as members with Spilsbury might seem unwarrantable given that another arrestee, Lilburne, was not, but Unckles lived very near Spilsbury, and Dixe not far away. It seems reasonable to suppose that this city / north suburbs group was with him

⁵⁵ Barbon, *A reply to the frivolous*.. (E 96/20), 62; Barber, *STBD*, sig A3

contestants against Barbon, Chidley and others in 1642-3, ranking with Thomas Kilcop, one of those baptised by Blunt and soon to lead one of the seven London churches, R.B., and A.R., a spectral figure identified by Featley as A. Ritor, who despite his seeming lack of corporeal substance has since mysteriously acquired a forename 'Andrew'. Spilsbury also weighed in (rather belatedly).⁵⁶ Barber, supposedly a 'General Baptist', was the first publicly to defend Kilcop and his friends, whereas Kiffin, Patience, Mabbet, Gunne and other 'Particular Baptists' remained altogether silent in 1642/3. The silence stemmed from their discomfort with the means by which Blunt had inaugurated baptism by immersion. But given his more fundamental theological differences with Blunt, Kilcop and the others, why did Barber speak out?

The solution already proposed is that he had much in common with them. Certainly, in *A Short Treatise of Baptisme*, Barber, an experienced veteran of the struggle against High Commission,⁵⁷ made no doctrinal criticism of the Blunt group of 'Particular Baptists'. He wrote not as an individual but as part of a larger community: 'in obedience to God and in love of our country, we desire to publish what truth the Lord betrusts us withall'; other plural usages include a complaint against those who have 'behind our backs reproached us'. These references might signify a particular congregation, but Barber also defended the English Baptists *tout court*: 'those that profess and practice the dipping of Jesus Christ are called and reproached with the name of Anabaptists, although our practice be no other than what was instituted by Christ himself.' He must have known of the rebaptising of large numbers of "particular baptists", issuing his book after Barbon's broadside. But he made no attempt to differentiate himself from the chief objects of this attack, challenging Barbon to debate as if he were one of them.⁵⁸

Later historians, however, have been determined to make of Edward Barber a man with General Baptist affiliations from the start, even in the face of facts which signal the need for great caution. The *Baptist Bibliography* explained that in a 1643 broadsheet, Barber was 'challenging the Assembly to a debate on universal redemption, free will, perseverance', as if he intended to contest orthodox Calvinist positions on these issues.⁵⁹ Barber did want a debate. He and his friends were anxious to dissociate themselves from those that 'do walk very scandalously in the

⁵⁶ B[arbon], *A Discourse tending* (1642), E138/23; R.Barrow, *A Briefe Answer* (1642); A.R[itor], *Treatise of the vanity* (1642) E154/4; idem, *Second Part of the Vanity* .. [1642 E59/5; Kilcop, *Short treatise of Baptisme* (1642) E1113/1 [issued before 28 April 1642, when the Commons ordered his prosecution, CJ 2, 546-7]; Spilsbury, *Treatise* (1643), issued before 25 May when Thomason bought S. Chidley's *A Christian Plea*, E104/2, which refers to it in the preface.

⁵⁷ Barber, *Certain queries propounded*, [1650?] 14; idem, *The Storming and Routing of Tithes*, (1651) 9,

⁵⁸ Barber, *STBD*, preface A2v, sig A3, 28

⁵⁹ W. Whitley, *Baptist Bibliography*, I, 15 (no 23-643); B. R. White cited this entry to illustrate that 'Particular Baptists' set out their 1644 confession so as to clarify the 'genuine misunderstanding' arising from confusion between themselves and 'General Baptists'(!): 'Doctrine of the Church...', *Journal of Theological Studies*, ns, 19 (October 1968), 570-90 at 571.

broaching and practising of damnable errors and heresies'; as a result, true believers 'undergo the hatred revilings, and all manner of evil speakings of many' though these were taken as 'a sign to us of our blessedness'. But he wrote on behalf of 'anabaptists who only desire to own, embrace, profess and maintain the pure truths of God in the hatred of all errors, as namely universal redemption, free-will and falling away, with all other things contrary to wholesome doctrine' (my emphasis). It was in order to prove their abhorrence of these errors that Barber and his friends hoped 'that the Parliament would be favourably pleased... to call us before them, together with the doctors of the Synod as many as they please, and proclaim that all the accusers of what we hold contrary to the truth of God may here accuse us.'⁶⁰ Now free will and falling away were rejected by most General Baptists until the 1650s. But 'universal redemption' may here refer to the view (which had arisen in Lambe's congregation) that all could expect to be saved, so it does not necessarily indicate that Barber and his congregation stood for limited atonement.

It is impossible from his early writings to be sure of Barber's attitude to the eternal decrees; he had probably been a separatist, and there can be little doubt that these groups, emerging from the circles most exercised by the liturgical and theological tendencies of Laudianism, were 'orthodox calvinist' in the sense then understood. When and why Barber rejected such ideas may never be known, but it is perfectly possible that he did so after his conversion to believers' baptism. Even in 1648, he felt able to call on the authority of Theodore Beza (on persecution).⁶¹ It may be that the first leader with whom he felt any close affinity was Francis Cornwell, who had been converted probably in the summer of 1643. Cornwell travelled to London and on 27th Sept 1644 handed out copies of his new book at the door of the House of Commons.⁶² Later, Cornwell won members of Lamb's congregation for the practice of laying hands on all baptised believers and he may well have suggested its adoption in Barber's congregation. On 12 November 1645, 'Barber, with another of their way, went to each of them one after another, and laid both their hands upon every particular head, women as well as men, and either in a way of prayer, prayed they might receive the Holy Ghost; or else barely to every one of them used these words Receive the Holy Ghost.' Edwards probably exaggerated the sacerdotalism, but a ceremonial stress upon the priestly significance of the administrator is clearly inherent in the practice. The association of the rite of baptism with the receipt of grace (though as an effect rather than a cause), also strongly recalls the tradition of John Smyth. Surely the ceremony was a symbolic embodiment of the

⁶⁰ *The Humble request ...Anabaptists* (1643), written after the Westminster Assembly opened. An MS note on BL copy [669f8(27)] might read 'September', but is indistinct; R.S.Paul, *Assembly of the Lord*, 137-74.

⁶¹ Barber, *An Answer to the Eight Queries* (1648), 6; on the copy in the Congregational Library is an MS note: "Given at the House of Commons door, Sept 13 1648"

⁶² F.Cornwell, *The Vindication of the Royal Commission* (1644) E10/15, Td 27 Sept

tendency attacked by Spilisbury, in which 'men put more in baptism then is of right due unto it', which savoured of the 'popedom of Rome'. Later it was attacked on those grounds, both by Particular Baptists such as Kiffin and Edward Harrison, and General Baptists such as Samuel Oates and Henry Danvers. Amongst the most prominent defenders of the practice was the successionist John Spittlehouse.⁶³

Edward Barber's call for a debate with the divines is the earliest public recognition by Baptists that forces outside the congregations were involved in bringing theological orthodoxy up the agenda; in this, Parliament and Assembly sought to determine the limits of the permissible. But this was also the first known attempt to contest their dominance by organised political action. Barber and Nutt wanted to exert pressure on the Assembly to grant their hearing, and called on readers to 'get in their several parishes as many hands as they can to a Petition to the Parliament for this so reasonable a desire, the which Petition you shall have at M. Barbers in Threadneedle St at the horse shoe, from Thomas Nutt, one for every parish.'⁶⁴ This amounts to advance notice of a new phase in the history of the English Revolution.

6 The Politics of religion, 1642-44

In London, it seems, feeling was largely for the Parliament, but as the war dragged on, resentment spread at the costs and privations it was causing. Refugees and wounded swelled the ranks of the City's beggars. There were plots, such as the Waller plot in May 1643; shortly afterwards, the attempt to administer the covenant in Kent led to a rising there; and there were further mutterings in the City. When Bristol fell in July, the radicals mobilised in a mass petition for volunteers, and the war party mobilised crowds against the Lords' new proposals for a humiliating peace, but their own policy provoked an unprecedented demonstration of women.⁶⁵ It is interesting that Barber's church had been 'accused as factious movers of sedition and rebellion, and the cause of these unnatural wars, and of the difference betwixt his majesty and the parliament'.⁶⁶ In rejecting the charge that Baptist churches had caused the war, one pamphlet protested that the 'prelates were the first beginners of these troubles by urging their service book upon the Scots'; he denied

⁶³ Gang I, 104; Spilisbury, *Treatise*, 40; *A Discourse between Capt. Kiffin and Dr Chamberlain about imposition of hands* [9 May] (1654), E735/4; Danvers 'A Treatise of Laying on of Hands' appended to his *A Treatise of Baptism* (1674); J. Spittlehouse, *A Confutation of .. Mr Samuel Oates.. not practising the laying on of hands*, (1653) E699/12; *Fenstanton*, 64.

⁶⁴ *The Humble request... Anabaptists*, (1643)

⁶⁵ Gardiner, *HGCW*, I, 144-9, 180-1, 185-7; B.Manning, *EPER*, 312-13; C.V.Wedgwood, *The King's War*, 182-4, 221-2; Everitt, *Community of Kent*, 189-200

⁶⁶ *The Humble request... Anabaptists*, (1643)

that the Baptists were 'his majesty's enemies.'⁶⁷ In both these formulations there is, under the cover of the conventional fiction that the war was for 'king and parliament', a neutralist flavour which might suggest that the mood in London was more mixed than Pym's propaganda made out.

During the first months of the civil war, the withdrawal of many religious conservatives to the King contributed to something of a decline in the number and rabidity of hostile pamphlets. One Baptist felt now able to respond flippantly to the now well-worn gibes against tub-preachers that 'in houses, tubs are more frequent than pulpits'. But most Parliamentary clergymen were convinced of the need for a disciplined church. As early as 19 October 1642, a bill providing for the convening of an Assembly of Divines in order to the settling of religion, was read for a third time in the Lords, but the Assembly did not open until the following 1 July.⁶⁸ In the meantime, Independent pastors sought to restrain lay preaching and the growth of separatist and baptist conventicles, in accordance with their earlier agreement. There were sporadic prosecutions for conventicling, but the absence of an episcopal apparatus, and other factors, undermined such efforts. These included the growing size of the problem (particularly in London), the importance of religious radicals in helping organize for the war effort, and the lack of a means of ordaining new clergy and of agreed standards for regulating churches. The last named depended on the Assembly of Divines. But the shape of any agreement in matters spiritual, which that body might realistically hope to achieve, depended on the balance of earthly forces.

These were much affected by the political and military influence of the Scots. On 28 August, the Assembly received the first draft of Solemn League and Covenant; on 25 September 1643, after some amendment, it was solemnly sworn by the Parliament and the Assembly in a ceremony at St Margaret's Westminster addressed by Philip Nye. The Scottish Commissioners arrived at the Assembly on 20 November, and were active behind the scenes; early in 1644, the incursion of the Scottish army strengthened their position. From autumn 1643, there were efforts to deal with the antinomians. There were isolated successes. On 9 Oct 1643, the antinomian separatist John Simpson was discharged from his lectureship of St Botolph's Aldgate, and suspended from preaching by order of Commons. In November, the Assembly set up a special committee to examine the broader problem. But how to define antinomianism was not altogether clear, a fact already discovered by the orthodox of Massachusetts in their dealings with John Cotton, whose work *The Keyes to the Kingdom of Heaven* appeared in London in June 1644 (with a preface by Thomas Goodwin and Nye). Even had fixing theological boundaries been easy, the

⁶⁷ *The Round-heads catechism*, (1643) E1205/1 Td April (1643), 8-11 14: 'The author dwells in Angel Alley in Whitechapel'. 'Also he will be thankful to you if you will buy of him good peniworthis of sugar. spices or small wares', 32; contents seem to suggest the author was Thomas Nutt.

⁶⁸ *The Round-heads catechism*, (1643) E1205 1, 13; Gardiner, *HGCW* I, 37, 232.

growing sense amongst many zealous supporters of Parliament was that God's free grace was the liberty for which they struggled. On 11 December, the Assembly was urged 'that we should hasten our work against the antinomians', but the problem grew worse. Thomas Goodwin claimed to 'hate them as much as any' but was reluctant to punish them. Baillie's reports of the increase in Anabaptists and antinomians became even more frequent in 1644.⁶⁹

The Westminster Assembly included erastians, and for months, moderate Episcopalians; it did not begin as a battleground between Presbyterians and Independents, who shared much common ground.⁷⁰ Nevertheless by autumn 1643, the later alignment was already crystallizing; lay preaching and church-gathering were key factors in the process. The suppression of lay preaching depended on establishing an agreed procedure for licensing ministers. On 8 November 1643, it was reported that Nicholas Lockyer, having gathered his own church, was urging others to do the same, and that John Goodwin and Nathaniel Holmes had ordained a Mr Anderson informally. The Independents faced a dilemma, in that their verbal commitment to a reformed national church conflicted with the principle whereby each congregation called its own minister; they therefore sought to legalise the latter's role through devices such as licensing, opposing synodical powers in this as in other matters.⁷¹

Of course, the 'Presbyterians' were not a monolith; but the Independents were much more disparate. Most did not break decisively from the national church; still, gathering congregations across parochial borders tended to undermine them. Leaders such as Thomas Goodwin, sought to make the proposed new national church acceptable to semi-separatists by negotiating a high degree of decentralisation. In the Assembly, Stephen Marshall and Philip Nye were anxious to reach compromises with the Presbyterians;⁷² Nye used his influence to prevent the presentation of a petition against the Solemn League and Covenant. Outside it, however, many who shared little with the ecclesial politics of the leading Independents, clustered under the umbrella of 'Independency'. Ogle distinguished in October 1643 between 'the independents and brownists, among whom do some few and very inconsiderable anabaptists and other fantastic sectaries mix themselves'.⁷³ On 20 November, 1643, the Assembly received a six point letter from the London ministers, directed against the 'present anarchy; the increase of Anabaptists, Antinomians, and other sectaries; the boldness of some in the city, and about it, in gathering separate congregations'. The committee set up for the purpose reported on 'the seduction of people into sects',

⁶⁹ Gardiner. *HGCW* I 234-5; Tai Liu, *Discord in Zion*, 24-8; Paul *AL* 163-74, 178; *Lightfoot*, 56-7, 37-8, 79; *Baillie* 2, 117, 140, 157, 169, 211-2; for John Simpson, see Greaves, *Saints and Rebels*, (1985), 99-132

⁷⁰ See eg Paul, *Assembly*, 324, *ibid* 158-63, 163-72, 173

⁷¹ *Lightfoot*, 46; Paul *AL*, 143-4, 182-6, 146-54.

⁷² *Baillie* 2, 230; for Marshall, J. Wilson *Pulpit in Parliament*, 112, 109-10

⁷³ 'A Secret Negotiation', *Camden Miscellany*, vol 8 (1883) 1-8, at 4, 5-6.

urging that 'they that know who gather churches, shall take notice of them, and we shall seek redress'; the Independents response was muted: Nye defended hesitantly the phrase "'gathering of churches" to which he was fully and home answered'.⁷⁴

What worried the Divines was not so much the three or four respectable Independent congregations formed in the year from June 1643, but a broader movement, which Westminster coalition politics could not easily restrain. Their petition, Edwards informed the Apologetical Narrators, concerned 'many others than yourselves'. On 20 November 1643, London ministers petitioned the Assembly and Baillie attacked 'that democratic anarchy and independency of particular congregations.'⁷⁵ On 23 December, the Assembly issued a united paper against the further gathering of churches, signed by twenty one divines, including not only Presbyterians, but also the Independents Goodwin, Nye, Sidrach Simpson, and the four Williams, Burroughs, Bridge, Carter and Greenhill. The Independents had resisted pressure to 'lay down and disband' existing gathered churches, but now agreed that 'all ministers and people be earnestly entreated to forbear for a convenient time the joining of themselves into church societies of any kind whatsoever' till 'right rule' be established and acceptable leeway for consciences granted by the magistrate. In signing this, the leading Independents were 'almost leaning over backwards to prevent a breach between themselves and the majority'.⁷⁶

However, the signatories did not condemn the gatherers of churches thus far; those 'at this time entering into church societies' included 'many of those we dearly love in the Lord'; future arrangements would respect the rights of 'particular congregations'. In this paper, some thought too much had been conceded to the Independents. But they alone had the moral authority to restrain the spontaneous process of church gathering in the absence of any coercive apparatus and were able to threaten successfully to 'suppress the paper', (ie to render it nugatory by withdrawing support), if 'any one word of it' were altered. Baillie had started off hopeful ('good is expected from this means'), but changed his mind within days: 'I expect more evil to our cause from it than good'. The paper alarmed the radicals, who saw no reason to abjure the gathering of congregations, and opposed even the concept of an established national church. Then, on 28 December, 'some of the Anabaptists came to the Assembly's scribe with a letter, enveighing

⁷⁴ Baillie2, 111; Paul AL 180-1; Lightfoot, 62

⁷⁵ Edwards, *Antapologia*, 5; Baillie II, 111, 115; Lightfoot, 56-7

⁷⁶ *Certain Considerations to Dis-swade Men from Further Gathering of Churches*, (1643) E78(16) 5, 3, 4, Lightfoot, 92; Gardiner, *HGCW*, I, 267-8; Paul, Assembly, 190-1

against our covenant, and carrying with them a printed sheet of admonitions to the Assembly from an old English Anabaptist at Amsterdam, to give a full liberty of conscience to all sects'.⁷⁷

This was *An Exhortation*, whose author is given in the text as Mark Leonard Busher, 'in the 72 year of his age', a 'pilgrim in Holland'.⁷⁸ Like his *Religion's Peace* (1614), Busher's pamphlet urged unlimited toleration: 'It may be you will say, shall we then tolerate every sect? I say yea, you ought to do it, if you will obey Christ, and not displease him, who forbiddeth you and the magistrate to pluck up the tares, and commandeth you both, to let them grow till the harvest, that is the end of the world.'⁷⁹ The work had been brought to Lightfoot at the Assembly by 'a man recommended to me by Mr Spencer'. It seems very likely that this was the John Spencer of the separatist Green-Spencer church at Crutched Friars in 1639, the militant lay preacher earlier mentioned.⁸⁰ The work had been 'printed in Amsterdam' and signed on 28 October 1643; copies cannot have been long in England. Lightfoot records the arrival of 'a bundle of books, or rather copies of one book' at the assembly, and in Baillie's account 'anabaptists' had brought the work. It therefore seems most likely that Spencer was already a Baptist. If so it means that the 'particular baptist' Spencer was helping to distribute a work of the 'general baptist' Busher; it may be doubted whether either man would have recognised the chasm here indicated.

The work infuriated the leading Independents. 'Goodwin, Nye and their party', reported Baillie, were for 'suppressing all such fanatic papers'; both he and Lightfoot confirm the hostility of the Independents as a 'party' to the proposal for toleration: the 'business from Amsterdam .. was very much opposed by the Independent party; and it cost a great deal of agitation and a little hot, and, after all it was not read'; 'many marvelled at Goodwin and Nye's vehemency in that matter'.⁸¹ The Independents, however, could not take this stand in public without disowning their

⁷⁷ *Certain Considerations to Dis-swade..* E78(16), 1, 3; Baillie2, 121, 118; Lightfoot, 93 (28 Dec): the work was 'directed to the Assembly from Amsterdam'.

⁷⁸ *An Exhortation Unto the Learned Divines assembled at Westminster*, 'printed in Amsterdam', 7

⁷⁹ C. Lawne, *Prophane Schism*, 56; S. Wright, 'Leonard Busher, Life and Ideas', *BQ* 39 (2001), 275-92; W. Burgess 'James Toppe..' *TBHS* 3, 204-5; Whitley 'Leonard Busher, Dutchman' *TBHS* 1 107-13; idem 'Baptised - Dipped for Dead' *BQ* 11, 175-7; *Burrage* 1, 277-8; *Burrage* 2, 257-9; Busher, *Exhortation*, 4.

⁸⁰ Not a baptist in 1639, a claim probably originating in Crosby's misleading paraphrase (*Crosby* 1, 148-9) which retrospectively made the Green-Spencer church Baptist; however in *A discourse opening that nature of episcopacy* (1641), E177/22, 99-100 Robert Greville (Lord Brooke) thought himself well informed about the Baptists, and his informant was probably the coachman; Spencer's part from June 1652 in acquiring the estate at Theobalds, later a Baptist colony (Gentles, DMMP, 166-9, 337; P.R.O. C54/3696/33), may suggest his conversion took place earlier; Erbury gives 'Captain Spencer' as an independent preacher in 1652 (*The Bishop of London* E684/26, 2), but this may easily be a different person; P.R.O. E121/3/4/27 (25 July 1651) gives him both as 'Captain John Spencer' and 'John Spencer of London gent' the attorney of soldiers of Thomas Harrison's horse regiment for acquisition of lands in Marylebone Park; a John Spencer son of Basil Spencer a London leatherseller, was apprenticed to William Spencer from 14 July 1635 (Reg. of Apprentices, 1629-77) and made free of the Leathersellers, 23 July 1644 (Reg. of Freeman 1630-94, 26)

⁸¹ Lightfoot, 93; Baillie2, 121 (1 Jan 1644); Lightfoot, 93; Paul *AL*, 191-2, De Witt, *Jus Divinum*, 89-91.

Separatist allies, so they released a document, designed to accommodate the pressures upon them from left and right. This was the famous pamphlet *An Apologeticall Narration*, registered either one or two days after the row over Busher's pamphlet.⁸² Though published 'on a sudden', it expressed carefully prepared positions which 'long had lain ready beside them'. Actually a very moderate document, it sought chiefly to build bridges to the erastians by stressing commitment to the magistrate's civil power. At the end there appeared a special plea, for 'an allowance of a latitude to some lesser differences with peacableness, not knowing where else with safety, health and livelihood, to set our feet on earth'. This represented the minimum possible gesture to Separatists, Baptists, and the Independents' own followers, angry at the leaders' willingness to delay as 'unseasonable' the formation of churches of the godly. The Narrators even repudiated their name, that 'proud and insolent title of Independencie .. a trumpet of defiance against whatever power, spiritual or civil; which we abhor and detest..' ⁸³ Only later did the work sound clearly through its own muffled protests as the 'trumpet of defiance' here distasteful. The Independents intended by it a gesture to their own allies, and not a breach with the Presbyterians. They seem to have restricted tightly the distribution of the pamphlet,⁸⁴ which became more generally available only in late January.⁸⁵ It continued their earlier 'responsible' policy of being seen to restrict their propaganda efforts to the Assembly and to Parliament, rather than, as they rather smugly observed, 'venting them to the multitude, apt to be seduced, (which we have had this three years opportunity to have done).'⁸⁶

Of course, larger factors were raising the temperature of the Independent-Presbyterian dispute in this period. But it does seem that it was Busher's pamphlet which, at the session of 28 December, immediately provoked the Independents first to a 'vehement' denial of the principle of unlimited toleration, but second, almost immediately, to embrace it, in a public statement earlier prepared, which dissented from the Assembly majority on the issue. This in turn set them on the road to confrontation with the Presbyterians. But in January and February, Presbyterians and Independents continued a wary cooperation; both had hopes of composing a settlement, and both wished to restrain the sectarian movement. It seems possible that Independent friends persuaded

⁸² *Apologeticall Narration*, E80 7; Eyre and Rivington *Transcripts of the Stationers Register 1640-1708*, give entered 30 Dec; De Witt, *Jus Divinum*, 89 note 140 gives 29 Dec; Edwards recalled that it 'came forth in the month of December, and to my best recollection towards the end of it' *Gang* II 62; Paul, Assembly, 231-2.

⁸³ Letter to Spang, 14 Feb 1644, *Baillie* 2, 130; *Apologeticall Narration*, 17, 31, 23

⁸⁴ Paul notes the lack of contemporary references to the work in January, and the continuing cooperation between its authors and the Presbyterians in the Assembly (Paul *AL* 208-9 228-9).

⁸⁵ Paul *AL* 228-9; *Lightfoot* (26 Jan), 122-3; *Baillie* 2, 130.

⁸⁶ *Apologeticall Narration*, 27-8, 23; Edwards marshalled much evidence (*Antapologia*, E1/1, 214-25) against this disingenuous claim, but its invention is important. All this sits uneasily with Jordan's paean to the Narrators' heroic and implacable resolution' in the cause of religious liberty [*RRTE*, III, 47-8]

Spencer, Kiffin and Spilsbury that the circulation of Busher's pamphlet calling for unlimited toleration was 'unseasonable'; George Thomason would have been interested, surely, to look at the little booklet which had caused such turbulence at the Assembly. But despite its having been available in a 'bundle' there, he apparently did not acquire a copy.

By September 1644 Baptists were visible in most of the areas under Parliamentary control. In Essex, Edwards's story that an 'anabaptist whose dwelling is at Castle Henningham, preached at Chensford [Chelmsford] in a house where (as common fame goes) there's wine and women good store' may have owed something to the Presbyterian imagination, but the village had been home to several separatists presented at Easter 1641. In June 1643, Chelmsford was 'filled with sectaries, especially Brownists and Anabaptists... They have amongst them two sorts of anabaptists; the one they call the old men or *Aspersi*, because they were but sprinkled and the other they call the new men or *immersi* because they were overwhelmed in their rebaptisation.' (This famous report of Aulicus rather supports the earlier suggestion that Thomas Lambe had probably converted there by the end of 1640, before the first known immersions.)⁸⁷ In April 1642, two Kelvedon women, Elizabeth Fuller, and Ann Hutley, wives of a butcher and labourer respectively 'do profess themselves to be Anabaptists and are great disturbers of the peace', and in September 1644, Thomas Robyson, a smith of Rochford, was presented as an Anabaptist.⁸⁸ On 30 September 1644, there appeared at the Beccles sessions Thomazine Stott, 'who refused to go to church, confessing she was an anabaptist, and had lately been rebaptized, and had been ordered to gaol until she conform herself' and was now bailed on promise of good behaviour. Stott had protested with Lambe in January 1641 against their arrest and imprisonment in London.⁸⁹

In Bucks, with the royalists in part-control, there was an early sighting of Stephen Dagnall, the baptist bookseller of Aylesbury.⁹⁰ There in February 1644, took place 'a very fine tumult on Sunday morning last, by reason of a Tailor that was preaching in a conventicle'; the meeting was interrupted by soldiers from Aldridge's regiment, who 'laid about them, pulled men and women's coats off their backs. Stephen Dagnall, the book-binder had his little cape torn from his cloak and his wife (poor soul) lost her neck handkerchief and apron'; the preacher was forced to drink Prince Rupert's health.⁹¹ Baptists had made substantial progress in Kent, winning over two

⁸⁷ *Mercurius Rusticus*, 3rd week, 3 June 1643, E105/25. 17

⁸⁸ *Gang* II, 151-2; E.R.O., QSR 312/67-73; QSR 316/28; QSB 322/44.

⁸⁹ V Redstone ed., 'Extracts from the Sessions order book', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, vol 15 (1913-15), 152-82, at 175; H.L.R.O. Main Papers, 19 Jan 1641

⁹⁰ See for Dagnall *Gang III*, 105; A. Baines, 'The Signatories of the Orthodox Confession, 1679', *BQ* 17, (1957-8), 74-86, at 74-5

⁹¹ *Mercurius Aulicus*, wk 7, (E35/27) 11-17 Feb 1644, 830-1; 'this tailor is able to shape a piece of divinity better than any of your prelatical tradesmen' (*Mercurius Britannicus* no 25, 26 Feb-6 Mar, E35 28, 195).

ordained ministers, Francis Cornwell and Christopher Blackwood. Luke Howard, many years later, also recalled the presence there of William Kiffin in 1643/4. Also in 1644, Lambe was in Kent with Coxe, still a colleague, who had himself already been twice imprisoned in Coventry, Works.⁹² In that county, William Erbury was in this period 'a most zealous re-baptiser' who 'rebaptised more than any one man that I heard of in the country'. Mary Trapp of Stratford upon Avon wrote in 1644 that 'The church swarmes with Antinomians, anabaptists and sects of all sorts. God of his mercy settle us'.⁹³

Aulicus heard of two preachers of Herts, one 'a weaver, one Walley of Rickmersworth, the other a postilian, the very man that taught the Lord Brook... placed by the rebels in two sequestered benefices (Master Walley at Rickmersworth, and master Postilian at Hemstead)'.⁹⁴ This seems to refer to Spencer, perhaps replacing a Baptist detained earlier in April in Newgate (if so, Spencer too was by now a baptist): this was George Kendall. On 23 March 1643 the profits of Hemel Hemstead were sequestered to him as the new vicar, 'a Godly, learned and orthodox divine'. Kendall may have been godly and learned, but his orthodoxy did not last long. On 1 March 1644, several parishioners petitioned the Lords that though Kendall did 'at his first coming baptise infants' he had since refused. On 2 March, Cornelius Burgess told the House that he himself had preached at Hemel Hemstead and 'finds the people there much possessed with anabaptism and antinomianism, and other sects'; George Kendall was 'the chief promoter of all the distractions there'. On 14 March Kendall was examined by the Lords, and sent to Newgate. On 21st, as a close prisoner, he petitioned for the liberty of the prison; this was granted on condition 'he be not suffered to preach, or disperse his opinions'. On 8 April he was released, on security of £500 not to publish or preach anything 'contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England'.⁹⁵ It may be presumed that this was not followed to the letter. (A successor was appointed in May). A former curate named Kendal later appeared in *Gangraena*.⁹⁶

Meanwhile, he had invited Robert Baldwin, who seems to have had a Thursday lecture at Hatfield, to preach at Hemel Hemstead. There on 8 Feb 1644, Baldwin was said to have preached 'neither for the King, Parliament nor Synod, but absolutely against all authority'. Then, and again at Hemel Hemstead on 15 February, he had not only made seditious statements, but also attacked

⁹² L. Howard, *A Looking Glass for Baptists* (1671). 5

⁹³ Baxter, *PSP*, 148; A Hughes, *Godly Reformation and its opponents in Warwickshire*, (1993), 3.

⁹⁴ *Mercurius Aulicus*, wk 17, 21-27 April 1644, E47/14, 951.

⁹⁵ *CJ* 2, 743, 1002; *LJ* 5, 558, 667; *LJ* 6, 443, 446, 470, 480, 500; substantially reproduced in W. Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts*, 430-3.

⁹⁶ Edwards was told of a Kendall, once a Northamptonshire curate, 'a great creature of Sir John Lams, a bower at the altar' but now 'a great Sectary' in 'the Isle of Ely, that Island of Errors and Sectaries' *Gangraena* III, 79-80. Perhaps George Kendall of Rothwell, Northants, ord priest (Peterbro) 12 June 1636, (Foster, *AI Oxon*; Longden, *Northants and Rutland clergy* VIII, 73; Wood, *Ath Oxon* III, 677

the baptizing of infants; on 27 February, he challenged Mr [William] Tutty minister of Totteridge in writing: 'I propose to maintain that infants of days are not fit subjects of baptism ... The place for the dispute to be Mimms Steeple House' on 6 March 1644; the Lords ordered his committal to the Gatehouse, from where he was released on 20 August.⁹⁷ (This is one of several early Baptist references to 'steeple houses' and 'friends', terms they passed on to the Quakers). Timothy Batt had left the Lambe church, but 'exercised his ministry at Mimms in Middlesex, while the war continued'; (North and South Mimms straddle the county border).⁹⁸

Such activities were acutely embarrassing to the Independent divines of the Assembly. In June 1644 Baillie reported that the 'Independents have set up a number of private congregations' in London recently, but of these only those of Carter and Greenhill were 'Independent' in the narrow sense. Baillie must have included amongst them the growing number of others under the umbrella of the political Independent party; only thus could he report that 'the most of their party are fallen off to Anabaptism, antinomianism and socinianism; the rest are cutted amongst themselves.'⁹⁹ But military developments helped turn the tide for Independency: these included the victory at Marston Moor on 7 July, the reverse at Lostwithiel, the failure of Crawford's attempts to purge the Eastern Association, Scottish military inactivity and the support attracted by Montrose. In England religious conservatives tended increasingly to follow a Presbyterian lead, and Presbyterians began to consider the advantages of an early peace. All this tended to discredit both the Scots and the aristocratic generals, Essex and Manchester, in the eyes of the war party and to confirm the Independents as its decisive component. In the absence of credible peace proposals, this in turn strengthened the Independent-Erastian bloc in Parliament. In mid August, it drastically amended the Assembly's proposals on ordination by Presbyteries *in jure divino*. Overall, in summer 1644, the balance shifted towards the Independents. But this only awoke the Assembly Presbyterians to the urgency of establishing church government; the overall effect, therefore, was to sharpen the antagonism between the two sides.¹⁰⁰

7 Church politics and the 1644 confession

The growth of sects and antinomianism was a recurrent theme in the Assembly between July and September 1644; it was revealed that even some ministers who had been examined and passed 'prove anabaptists and antinomians' and in the discussion which followed this disturbing news,

⁹⁷ LJ 6, 470, 681; Urwick, *NH*, 210-11, 583-4.

⁹⁸ Calamy, *Account*, 603; Gang I, 70-1;

⁹⁹ Edwards, *Antapologia* 253, 307; *Tolmie*, 95; *Baillie2* (9 June) 193, (7 June) 191-2; Edwards exposed the logic of the independent pastors's principles in *Antapologia*, 49-50 quoted in *Tolmie*, 99

¹ *Baillie2*, (18 August), 220-1; Paul *AL*, 395-9.

the vote on whether on dipping be permitted as a baptismal form resulted in a tie. The debate was conducted with the baptists in mind: Ley argued that 'If we say dipping is necessary we shall further anabaptism'; when the Assembly resumed its deliberations after a two week recess, a report was heard on the activities of a baptist preacher in Guernsey, Thomas Picot, now prisoner.¹⁰¹ Also that day it was ordered that a committee consisting of Marshall, Herle, Gataker, Ley, Palmer, Wilson, and Gouge, and Nye should 'take notice of the camplaints now tendered concerning anabaptists and antinomians and to consider of a remedy and to make report to this Assembly'. On 9th, Marshall submitted its report, naming as chief amongst the miscreants 'one Knowle, an anabaptist, and Penrose, Randall, Simson, Tandey, Cornhill, Blackwood, Cursor'. There was 'particularly one Mr Knowles an active man. A meeting in Cornhill about the baptising of a child. He preached at Bow church [about] one of the sins of the land the sin of retaining the baptising of children amongst us...'. An account of the preachers' activities was sent to the Commons, where Marshall repeated the charges. As a result, Hanserd Knollys was imprisoned in Ely House before being questioned by the Committee for Plundered Ministers in session there.¹⁰² Of the others, Christopher Blackwood, and Francis Cornwell (who also appears as Cornhill in Assize records) were also baptists by this time; John Simpson, later a Baptist, was the preacher at All Hallows; Philip Tandy was reported to be a Seventh Day Baptist active at York. (All these, together with Giles Randall, who 'loves his sack bottle better than the eternal law of God' appear in *Gangrena*; Cursor and Penrose have not yet been identified).^{1 3} Baillie referred on 10 Aug to 'the Anabaptists huge increase and insollencies intollerable', and plans for suppressing them (28 Aug) which were being obstructed (16 September). Amongst the preachers at Westminster Abbey, was Stephen Marshall, who followed up his report against Baptists of 9 August by delivering at the morning lecture appointed by Parliament, a sermon in favour of infant baptism, 'now made a great controversy'.¹⁰⁴

Determined to use their strength in the Assembly to hasten a religious settlement, the Presbyterians also became less careful to distinguish the congregational Independents' views from those of the sects. Confronted with a report which sought to outlaw those who preached that 'ministers of the church of England are no true ministers' and who sought the 'power of ordination without officers', Nye objected that these were 'supposed to be the conceits of those called anabaptists and antinomians, but in most of our writings we make a destruction of those

^{1 1} *Lightfoot*, 299-300, 301, 311; 22 July, MINUTES2, 265; 7 August, 1644, MINUTES2, 269

¹⁰² *Lightfoot*, 302; MINUTES2, 277-8, 286; *CJ* 3, 584-5 (9 Aug); [Whiston] *The life ... Knollys*, (1696), 20.

¹⁰³ T.Bakewell, *A Faithful Messenger* (1644), 29; Randall, see *Gang* I 97, III, 25; Greaves, *G-Z*3, 80. Tandy: *Gang* III, 56; Aylmer SS 142-3, 231-2, Seymour, *Puritans in Ire and*, 171-2; Simpson: Greaves, *Saints and Rebels*, (1985), 99-132.

¹⁰⁴ S.Marshall, *A Sermon on the baptising of Infants*, E7/21, 26 Aug, S.R. I, 130; Td, 28 Aug, preface.

two... You know under what notions we are aspersed. We are called Brownists, Anabaptists by the episcopal party'. But the episcopal party was no longer in charge, and such objections were brushed aside. On 5 September, Nye threatened to publish an Independent dissent against suppressing the congregations.¹⁰⁵ Presbyterians were becoming impatient: for Burgess, 'there have been in this assembly too much delaying from timely and seasonable remedies against schism'; Nye responded defensively: 'I will not be a patron for anabaptists but I question whether simply forbearing this way be called a schism. Calamy: It is a sin of the kingdom that we have taken an oath to endeavour the extirpation of... These sects increase and thence our armies are divided.' The disputants were acutely aware of the struggle between Cromwell and Manchester now unfolding in the wake of Lostwithiel. The Presbyterians, and especially the Scots, were pressing on: from 13 September, the business of designing a hierarchical church government began in earnest; on 26th the subject was 'subordination of the assemblies'.¹⁰⁶ On 18 September city ministers presented to the Commons a petition against 'erroneous opinions, ruining schisms and damnable heresies'; complaining that through them 'the orthodox ministry is neglected, the people seduced; congregation torn assunder', they urged the House not to 'leave private persons or particular congregations to take up what form of service they like.'¹⁰⁷

Irrespective of their attachment to the value of individual conscience, many Independents were seriously worried that their own liberty might be threatened by tests of orthodoxy chiefly aimed at Baptists or Antinomians. (Baptists were rumoured to have been tolerated within the exiled congregations at Arnhem and Rotterdam).¹⁰⁸ As Nye had noted, 'Anabaptism' and 'Brownism' were routinely used as interchangeable terms of abuse by conservative opponents – and these now increasingly included the more inflexible Presbyterians. He and his independent colleagues had friends amongst the groups of Baptists originating chiefly in the Jacob-Jessey and How-More churches and their offshoots. One of the rogue preachers named by Marshall in August, 'one Knowle, an Anabaptist', had come lately to such circles. On returning to London from service with Manchester's army, he joined Jessey's church, but was troubled by the problem of whether to baptise his young child. In spring 1644, the congregation sought the advice of its friends of several persuasions. In late May there met at the house of Independent William

¹⁰⁵ MINUTES2, 311; *Lightfoot*, 308; Gillespie, 'Notes', 65-6; Paul, Assembly 401

¹⁰⁶ MINUTES2, 355-6; Paul, Assembly, 407-11

¹⁰⁷ *To the Honourable, the House of Commons*, quoted Tai Liu, *Discord*, 52, and Jordan *RRTE*, III, 55, Gardiner, *HGCW*, II, 75, Shaw *History*, I, 177

¹⁰⁸ Sprunger, *DP* 226; *Gang* III, 99-100; Edwards, *Antapologia*, 35-7, 56-7, 262; Jessey's former patron, Sir Matthew Boynton, was a member of the Arnhem congregation; Baillie reported 'the pest of anabaptism' at Rotterdam, *DET*, 78-81 as did *Gang* II, 16; Forbes, *Anatomy of Independency* 7; Petrie, *Chiliasmo-mastix*, E24(17), preface: these reports are vague as to dates.

Shambrooke, Marshall's colleagues Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye, with other Independents including Jeremiah Burroughs and Dr William Parker. William Kiffin, Sabine Staesmore, Praise-God Barbon, and a 'G Sympson' (perhaps John) also attended, and there were 'many conferences' in 1645, notably over Jessey's own conversion to believers' baptism in January. In spring 1644, it was decided that those who scrupled infant baptism could be dismissed without recrimination. Soon after, Knollys left, and began to preach for his new views in public, which brought him to the attention of Nye's colleague Marshall, and thence to detention.¹⁰⁹

By this time, however, political and military developments outside the Assembly were encouraging stiffer resistance within it. The Presbyterians were laying down the framework of church government and discussing tests for the exclusion of heretics; they became increasingly impatient with Independent foot-dragging in such matters, so the estrangement of the two parties deepened; symmetrically the Independents drew closer to the forces on their left.¹¹⁰ Altogether, the time was ripe for the Baptists to proclaim their right to congregate on the basis of moderately expressed doctrine and practice, enforced by a voluntary association of churches. This would firmly dissociate themselves from the more disruptive and disreputable lay preachers, and from accusations of social radicalism and theological unsoundness. For the Baptists it would help cement their friendship with the Independents and to secure their future in any arrangements in which the latter were influential. It seems likely that the Independents at the conferences in mid 1644 and in 1645 were fully aware of and approved the venture. They too had something to gain from it. The Baptists were no longer numerically insignificant amongst the London godly. But there were risks. In January 1645, Gillespie was to threaten the Independents: 'do not involve yourselves in the plea of toleration with the separatists and anabaptists. Do not partake in their separation, lest you partake in their suppression... O that God would put it in your hearts to cry down Toleration, and to cry up Accommodation!' ¹¹¹

Henry Jessey, an ordained minister from Yorkshire, may have helped win Independent acquiescence in the Confession.¹¹² Not yet himself a baptized believer, he was one of those few independent ministers who had not taken refuge abroad. Even in 1638, when his patron Sir Matthew Boynton had left for Holland, Jessey had remained in London and ministered to an illegal congregation in the days of High Laudianism, at considerable personal risk.¹¹³ There is no

¹⁰⁹ Stinton no 4, *TBHS* 1, 243, 245; for Shambrooke, see *Tolmie* 40-41

¹¹⁰ *Tolmie*, 85-119, lays great stress on the Independents' dissimulation, and not enough (it might be suggested), on their disparate following and inability to impose a unified stance upon it.

¹¹¹ G. Gillespie, *Wholesome Severity*, quoted Paul, *Assembly* 454-5

¹¹² Gardiner, *HGCW*, II, 30; B.R. White, 'Henry Jessey: a Pastor in Politics', *BQ* 25 (1973), 98-110

¹¹³ Bodl Tanner 433, 'Emigrants from Great Yarmouth, Michs 1637 - Michs 1638': 14 Aug 1638, 'Sir Matthew Boynton knt bart by virtue of a special warrant granted unto him by his majesty did with his lady

doubt that his reputation stood high. If Independents were anxious that the initiative might expose them, Jessey might have been the one to stress the need to defend the liberty of the consciences of his moderate and loyal friends. Perhaps the confession's timing was influenced by the appearance on 27 September, at the Commons, of Francis Cornwell, carrying copies of his book.¹¹⁴ Lamb's church seems to have been contacted about the confession. Lamb referred to Coxe's 'plain expressions in your own hand writing in the second proposition sent to Mr Patience concerning Christ's death in these words Christ in his passion did suffer for the sins of the whole world'. This suggests he was still orthodox, in Lamb's terms, and that the proposition was sent about summer 1644. Later, it was said that 'one Patience a botcher, or Tayler; [was] ordained also ... in a house in Bell Alley in Coleman St, by the saints of that church, forsooth, men and women .. upon trial of his gifts.'¹¹⁵ It is possible that Patience, as a former member with Lambe, had been selected to sound them out a few weeks before the confession was issued: the reference to Coxe's 'second proposition' suggests he had been charged to answer a formal communication from Patience.

However that may be, the main political imperatives which influenced the framers are readily evident from the preface. Its authors were clearly apprehensive about its reception: 'it will seem strange to many men that such as we are frequently termed to be, lying under that calumny and black brand of heretics and sowers of division as we, should presume to appear so publicly as we have now done'. They identify the City Presbyterian ministers, 'those that think themselves wronged, if they be not looked upon as the chief worthies of the church of God and watchmen of the City', as having provoked them to this venture into print. These men had 'smote us... that so we may be by them rendered odious in the eyes of all that behold us ... which they have done both in pulpit and print, charging us with holding freewill, falling away from grace, denying original sin, disclaiming of magistracy... doing acts unseemly in the dispensing of the ordinance of baptism, not to be named amongst Christians: all which charges we disclaim as notoriously untrue... We have therefore for the clearing of the truth we profess, that it may be at liberty though we be in bonds, briefly published a confession of our faith.'¹¹⁶

and family pass over into Holland', 84v; Jessey informed Winthrop of his reluctance to accept office in the church, because he was 'awaiting advice' from someone in New England. Perhaps he was intending to emigrate there with his patron Boynton, a plan abandoned when Boynton got his pass for Holland. (B. R. White, 'Henry Jessey in the Great Rebellion', 133); [E. Whiston], *Life and Death of Henry Jessey*, 1671, 9.

¹¹⁴ The printed signatures varied far more from their renderings in the 1646 edition than did the MS names in Stinton no 2. Perhaps the printer was working from the original signatures. This might suggest that the document, though carefully written, may have been actually issued hastily in response to some such event.

⁵ Lambe, *Christ Crucified*, A4v; *Hinc Illae Lachrymae* (1648) E421 6, 4.

¹¹⁶ *The Confession of Faith, of those churches... anabaptists ..* (1644) E12/24, preface unpag; text republished (from a second printing by Simmons) in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (1959) 153-71; B. White, 'The Doctrine of the Church...', *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol 19 (1968), 570-90

The theology of the confession was not orthodox enough to satisfy fully the razor-sharp minds of Scottish supralapsarianism. But it registered the adherence of the signatories to the five tests laid down at the Synod of Dort, falling short in failing to make explicit either that reprobation was foreordained (art 3) or that infants shared in Adam's sin (art 4). Even amongst these Baptists, there was evidently discomfort with the fiercer elements of predestinarian teaching. It has been convincingly argued that several of the theological formulations originate in William Ames' *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*.¹¹⁷ Very many clauses were copied directly from the separatist *A True Confession of Faith* (1596), but others are harder to pin down. It would be absurd to deny to the men of the time the ability to think for themselves; religion of the mid 1640s had general characteristics, and the politics of the period set limits for the practical and theoretical framework of congregational polity. New thinking is evident, and so sometimes is the reasoning behind it. Whereas the 1596 Confession had linked Christ's return to the Day of Judgement, the signatories of 1644 agreed that 'his kingly power shall be more fully manifested when he shall come in glory to reign amongst his saints' (art 20). The arrangements set down for the administration of the sacraments, and especially of baptism, and for the status of 'evangelists', reflected recent experience including the disintegration of the Blunt and Blakelock churches and the disagreements concerning the status of baptism as a foundation of the church¹¹⁸ and its proper administration. The disputed foundations of the ministerial order also encouraged a stress on the importance of the lay members. The proper method of founding a church was not set out, but ministers could not be, and were not, represented as indispensable to the church order, appearing for the church's 'better well being' (art 36; this is weakened in 1646 by omitting 'better'). The right to baptise was held by 'a preaching disciple, it being no where tied to a particular church officer or person extraordinarily sent'; (Spilbury might be thought not to have welcomed this) (art 41).¹¹⁹ Those 'to whom God hath given gifts being tried in the church, may and ought by the appointment of the congregation to prophesy' (art 45). The means of ministerial maintenance 'should be the free and voluntary communication of the church'; these persons 'should live on the gospel, and not by constraint to be compelled from the people by a forced law' (art 38).

It was clearly vital given the accusations to the contrary, that the signatories should repudiate accusations of opposing magistracy. They were scrupulous in denying all possible avenues

¹¹⁷ This was apparently first recognised by G. Stassen, 'Anabaptist Influence', *MQR* 36 (1962), but it seems that most references attributed by Stassen to Menno's Foundation Book did not originate there. For the Ames connection, S. Nelson, 'Reflecting on Baptist Origins: the London confession of 1644', *BHH*, 29(2) April 1994, 35-46; some Ames clauses may seem to be directed against Christological heresies.

¹¹⁸ Kilcop, *Unlimited authority* (1651) E1377(5), 17

¹¹⁹ This was only indirectly a response to 'the threat of the Seekers' (*Tolmie* 57); Kilcop, R.B., Ritor and Barber thought individual saints should originate immersion without having been delegated by a church.

for suspicion as to their motives in this regard: ‘we are bound to yield subjection and obedience’ to the magistrates, ‘as conceiving ourselves bound to defend both the persons of those thus chosen, and all civil laws made by them, with our persons liberties and estates... although we should suffer never so much from them in not actively submitting to some ecclesiastical laws which might be conceived by them to be their duties to establish, which we for the present could not see, nor our consciences could submit unto; yet are we bound to submit our persons to their pleasures’ (art 49). They humbly present their own preference that their own religion be tolerated by the state: ‘And if God should provide such a mercy for us as to incline the magistrates hearts so for to tender our consciences as that we might be protected by them from wrong, injury, oppression and molestation, which long we formerly have groaned under by the tyranny and oppression of the prelatical hierarchy’, which god had ‘thrown down; and we thereby have had some breathing time, we shall, we hope, look at it as a mercy beyond our expectation and conceive ourselves further engaged for ever to bless God for it’ (art 50). These formulations did not seek to defend or advance religious toleration in larger terms; the signatories merely hoped the state would decide to tolerate the seven churches. The possibility that the state might also tolerate the views of others (even other Baptists) is omitted altogether, and by this omission the signatories also strongly implied their indifference should it decline to do so.

Most important, of course, was the act of association which the confession embodied. ‘And though the congregations be distinct and several bodies, every one as a compact and knit city within itself, yet are they all to walk by one and the same rule, and by all means convenient to have the counsel and help of one another in all needful affairs of the church’. This was a very strong statement, perhaps designed to stress that the activities of all the members would be firmly supervised. The London Confession of 1644 was a union of seven churches, which replaced a loose association. This was surely based on a shared general outlook and commitment to believers’ baptism, and (as will be argued) was related to social and political connections too. But the free and voluntary agreement was in order to the regulation of members.

The 1644 signatories represented seven churches. They were, in order of appearance in the original edition, but with corrected spellings, 1) Kiffin and Thomas Patience, 2) John Spilisbury, George Tipping and Samuel Richardson; 3) Thomas Sheppard and Thomas Munday or Munden; 4) Thomas Gunne and John Mabbatt; 5) John Webb and Thomas Kilcop; 6) Paul Hobson and Thomas Gower; 7) Jo Phelpes and Edward Heath. Of these, Kiffin and Spilisbury have been sufficiently introduced. Patience had been converted in New England, returning in

1642, and as suggested above, may perhaps have initially joined with Lambe.¹²⁰ George Tipping, an Aldersgate St cordwainer, was arrested with Spilsbury, who lived in the same street in September 1641, when (it can fairly be presumed) he was already a baptist. Samuel Richardson's route into the church is unclear; he was a future writer on toleration, a prosperous London merchant whose 'cool pragmatism' was celebrated by Jordan, but who provoked the hot temper of John Lilburne.¹²¹ Thomas Sheppard was baptised by Blunt in 1642;¹²² Thomas Munday is an enigma.¹²³ Kilcop probably led a remnant from the Blunt church, in which he was joined by John Webb, formerly a member of the church of Samuel How. Gunne had also been a member of the How church, but a few months later he was arrested with Spilsbury and in mid 1643 was arrested again as leader of a conventicle. He may have been a free-man Cooper.¹²⁴ Mabbatt was probably a freeman Leatherseller. Phelpes and Heath are otherwise obscure.¹²⁵

There were two notable omissions from the list of signatories: Hanserd Knollys and Edward Barber. Hanserd Knollys had become a baptist about five months earlier. His wife had worried about the qualifications of a new administrator of Baptism. Yet these doubts had apparently been well enough satisfied for Knollys to have been leading a church following the conference at the end of May 1644. A more plausible reason is that both now and for several years to come, Knollys was more willing than other 'Particular Baptists' to risk confrontations with the authorities, by preaching provocative sermons and by attracting large crowds. He had already been in trouble with the Committee for Plundered Ministers, and early in 1645 his sermons in Suffolk gave rise to disorderly scenes.¹²⁶ It may be that he disliked the submissiveness to the magistracy to be found in some clauses of the Confession. Edward Barber did not sign either. His earlier literary solidarity with the Blunt group did not lead to any more permanent

¹²⁰ Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism* .. (1654), To Christian Reader, sig B2; B. White, 'Thomas Patient', *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal* 2, (1969-70) 36-48; *Tolmie*, 57 says he had returned recently in Oct 1644, but he had left New England by October 1642; (this undermines the idea that Kiffin was with Jessey till 1644, for had Kiffin's co-signatory Patient also been with him, he would have appeared in Stinton no 4.

¹²¹ Tipping, PRO, KB 9/832/13; oddly, Richardson's name is missing from Stinton no 2 (*Burroughs*, 305); *H-D*, 209; Jordan *RRTE* III 515-16; *Tolmie*, 61-2, 64, 141, 182

¹²² Not the Massachusetts Independent of those names who issued *New England's Lamentation* (1644)

¹²³ He might have been the Captain Munday of Weldon's Kentish regiment in April 1645 who died during the campaign in the west, (FD, 452-3; G. Davies, *EHC* 5, 124); or more likely the 'Thomas Munday late garrison souldier in Bristol under captain Lloyd during the siege thereof' who testified against Fiennes (Prynne, *A True Relation* E255(1) 1st pag 43; 2nd pag 27-8) in London, where he might have repaired with other Broadmead members who certainly did; a Thomas Munday of Bristol left Broadmead Church in 1652 to be baptised according to closed membership principles, (*Broadmead*, 18, 105, 300).

¹²⁴ Webb, *LJ* 4, 133-4; Gunne, *LJ* 4, 133-4, PRO, KB 9/832/13; PRO KB 9 823/113; Gunne was perhaps the freeman cooper of St Saviours, assessed at 2s in 1641: Dale, 'Members', 77

¹²⁵ The man so named of Bermondsey St, feltmonger (Dale, *Inhabitants*, 110), is probably the John Mabatt made free of the company by patrimony on 16 Oct 1632, (Leathersellers': Register of Freemen 1630-94, 3).

¹²⁶ *Tolmie*, 56; [Whiston], *The life... Knollys*, (1696), 20; Knollys, *Christ Exalted in a sermon begun* [1645, E284(14)]; idem, *Christ Exalted: a Lost sinner* [1646 E322(33)]

association. He had found new friends, and some account of these connections and their effects will complete this account of the pattern of congregational re-alignment in 1644/5.

8 The General Baptists of London and Kent: settlement and division.

The settlement and division of the General Baptists took place almost simultaneously. Following sharp internal disputes with Timothy Batte and Benjamin Coxe, Thomas Lambe's congregation parted company with the High Calvinist antinomians and constituted itself on the basis of universal atonement. Edward Barber detached himself from the loose association with the followers of Blunt and Blacklock; at an unknown date he too embraced general redemption. By 12 November 1645 he had been convinced, probably by Francis Cornwell, to adopt the practice of laying on of hands on baptised believers. The steps that took him along this road are not known, but in 1645 Barber issued a book which, whilst omitting any commitment to the laying on of hands, sets out the detailed elements of a church order in relation not only to Barber's own church, but to others with which it was associated.¹²⁷ Indeed this important work dealt extensively, and before all else, with external relations, referring often to churches in the plural. This practical focus marks it out as the founding document of an association with other churches, most probably those in Kent led by Cornwell, William Jeffrey and Christopher Blackwood.¹²⁸

In it, Barber wrote of 'apostles or messengers; the master builders, or layers of the foundation... which are usually said to be extraordinary or ceased.' It was only through falsely claiming that the ordinance had ceased 'an extraordinary deceit, that thereby they [the priests] may uphold the ministry of antichrist.' The apostles' role is treated at far greater length than that of other officers. They 'must be servants of the churches, and ministers of peace, not masters, disposing themselves where they please, but as servants to be disposed by them.' Apostles were themselves to be distinguished as an order different from both evangelists (prophets) and pastors: the apostle 'makes work for the evangelists by preaching and planting, before there can be need of watering'; he is 'a man of more knowledge and experience of the gospel, and therefore he is to direct and imploy the evangelists'. The status of this extraordinary officer seems to stem from the view that the extraordinary role of the Apostles had not ceased, and should now be embodied

¹²⁷ Barber, *A true discovery* (1645) defines a true church in which members 'putting on Christ by dipping' but does not mention laying hands on them; he first advocated this in *A Declaration and Vindication* Td Aug 12 (1648) E458/8, sig A3. This might not at first have been compulsory for members; Fenland churches also did not insist at first, though there, as in the Lamb church, the issue soon led to acrimony, *Fenstanton*, 137-143, 156-7, 202-5

¹²⁸ Cornwell's early adhesion to this custom (converted to Baptist views about spring 1643) suggests he got it from Jeffrey, founder of the Kentish Baptists.

within the church order. Barber's signing as 'servant to the churches of Christ' may register his having been recognised as such an apostle or messenger by other churches than his own.¹²⁹

From this standpoint, acceptance of the laying on of hands must have appeared as a natural progression. The ceremony was described by a Baptist naïve enough to confide in Thomas Edwards. After Barber and 'another of their way' had 'laid both their hands upon every particular head, women as well as men', and 'prayed they might receive the Holy Ghost.... they sat down to supper, which was dressed for them by a cook; when supper was ended before the cloth was taken away, they administered the Lord's supper'. This refers to a love feast or agape, which, like the laying on of hands, certainly originated in Europe; both were common amongst Dutch anabaptists.¹³⁰ 'After the receiving of that, in the close a question was propounded, Whether Christ died for all men or no? which they fell into dispute of; and being late, eleven of the clock at night, and the party who related it having a great way home, left the company hot at this disputation'. Perhaps the church was honing its debating skills into the small hours to prepare for combat with the Particular Baptists, but this is more likely to reflect the uncertainty of many members.

Edwards' informant reported of the laying on of hands that 'the like had been done in another Church of the anabaptists before'. This was perhaps the Kentish church of Cornwell, (he was perhaps the 'another of their way'), though it might have been Blacklock's church (of which nothing is known), or a successionist remnant. But it was not the Lamb congregation, and neither was it 'undoubtedly Barber's inspiration'. (It would be very strange if he created a faction for the rite in another congregation before introducing it in his own). The turn of Lambe's church came a few months later: 'about the year 1646, some 27 years since, one Mr Cornwell, heretofore a publick preacher then a member and minister of a baptized congregation in Kent, was a great asserter of this principle and practice; who coming about that time into that baptised congregation then meeting in the Spittle bishopsgate Street, London, did ... preach the necessity of laying on of hands'; now Danvers here says that this took place both in '1646', and whilst the church met at the Spital.¹³¹ Both statements place it after the ceremony in Barber's church in November 1645. In early 1646 the Lambe congregation was still meeting at Bell Alley Coleman Street, and seems to have moved to the northern Spitalfields end of Bishopsgate a little later, perhaps in February.¹³²

¹²⁹ Barber, *A true discovery*, 5, 2-3, 11-13, Preface, sig A2

¹³⁰ Gang I, 104-5; E.P. Winter, 'The Administration of the Lord's Supper ...' *BQ* 18 (1958-9), 196-204

¹³¹ Danvers, 'A Treatise of Laying on of Hands', 58, appended to his *A Treatise of Baptism* (1674).

¹³² Edwards often gave Denne as a Lamb member: 'in Lambs Church in Bell Alley he exercises; he was there lately..' Gang I, 92, 76, 77; Gangraena was issued in late February 1646, (Td 26 Feb); cf Tolmie, 79, 213, who dates the move from Bell Alley to the Spital as 'some time in the second half of 1645', a dating essential to his view that the church where 'the like had been done .. before' was Lambe's.

Furthermore, in the Lambe congregation, the laying on of hands was accepted only by a few, and no official ceremony 'the like' of that in Barber's church can have taken place there. As Cornwell argued, 'those that were not under laying on of hands, were not babes in Christ, had not God, nor communion with God. Whereupon, several of the said congregation were persuaded to come under that practice; and which notwithstanding the church in tenderness indulged to them, upon their promise of a peaceable demeanour in the church.' But despite these promises they began to urge that those who refused the custom were 'not to be communicated with in church ordinances (and as after was published in print, by a leading brother amongst them, in a book called God's oracle, and Christ's Doctrine) but made a rent and a separation for the same'. The 'leading brother', author and pastor was certainly John Griffith.¹³³ Making allowance for the period in which he and his friends remained in Lambe's congregation, Griffith must have founded his separate group in the middle or latter part of 1646, a dating broadly confirmed by the fact that he died on 16 May 1700 aged 78, having been 'about fifty four years a pastor'. The identification of Griffith as the leader of this schism disproves the idea that it was Barber's group which had left Lambe over the laying on of hands.¹³⁴ The new church was a part of a grouping of two London churches and at least two in west Kent. Discussion of the later significance for Baptists of this development must be postponed until the next chapter.

¹³³ Danvers, *ibid* 58; identified by Tolmie, 79; J.Griffith, *God's Oracle and Christs Doctrine* (1655)

¹³⁴ R. Allen, *A Gainful Death.. A sermon at the funeral of Mr John Griffith... died 16 May 1700 aged 78*, (1700), 41-2; cf B.White, *English Baptists* (1996), 30

5. The Baptists and Politics, 1645-47

1 Background to the 1646 Confession

Independent obstruction and the Scottish victory at Newcastle handed the initiative amongst Presbyterians to less moderate forces; opinion in Parliament gave ground to their demands. The Assembly was to press on with framing the Directory of Worship, a template for Presbyterianism in England. The accommodation committee was dissolved on 1 November and on 15th the Commons resolved that only lay preachers intending to become properly ordained should be allowed to preach; legal means to define and enforce this, however, had to wait.

The lack of means for official ordinations contributed to the sectarian initiative. Lay preaching continued, sometimes with the permission of churchwardens, in parishes where ministers had left or been sequestered. On 5 November 1644, Thomas Lambe preached at St Bennet, Gracechurch St, before 'a mighty great audience' and it is implied that he had been admitted to parish pulpits before. During early 1645, Independents and Erastians in Parliament sought to restrict the powers of the emergent English Presbyterian establishment in lay preaching, and excommunication. Under their influence, suspicion of clerical ambitions led Parliament towards assuming responsibility itself, so that, in accordance with Baillie's famous complaint, the Presbyterian settlement would be lame as well as Erastian.¹

On 26 April, following a mutiny of soldiers at Abingdon provoked by a sermon by Col John Pickering, Parliament was moved to pass an ordinance against lay preaching.² Less than a week later, posters appeared on the walls of the city 'inviting all those that had a desire to suppress conventicles, according to ordinance should the Sunday following assemble in Moorfields'. Presbyterians were probably responsible; if so, the posters were a foretaste of things to come from them. The Mayor was anxious to test the ordinance: 'Upon the ordinance of Parliament coming forth against mens preaching who are not ordained ministers, the last Lord Mayor having information of mechanics preaching in Coleman St appointed some officers to go and see; they coming to the house where Lambs church was in Bell Alley... The Church abused these officers and called them persecutors and persecuting rogues; but Lamb gave better words, and desired they might be let alone till they had finished their exercises', agreeing to attend the Mayor's house at six that evening. Here, the Mayor accused him of having broken the law. But Lambe evidently knew the wording of the ordinance, for 'he made answer, No, for he was a Preacher called and chosen by as Reformed a Church as any was in the world. My Lord took bail

¹ Shaw, *History*, I, 334-7; Jordan, *RRE*, III, 67-9

² Gang I, 93; Gardiner, *HGCW*, II 192-3.

of them to answer it before a Committee of Parliament, and they appearing, were committed for a while, and then let out by the means of some Friends they have'.³

There followed another successful challenge to the ordinance, again by Baptists. Captains Paul Hobson and Richard Beaumont had arrived in Newport Pagnell, apparently just before the battle of Naseby, travelling on a pass from Colonel Charles Fleetwood. According to the Governor, Sir Samuel Luke, 'the greatest part of the week they preached up and down the town ordinarily'. On Sunday 15th, the day following the battle, victory was celebrated in a service of thanksgiving. The two officers failed to attend, but 'withdrew themselves with a company of ignorant women, and a young boy... and seven men to Lathbury, where ... they exercised their gifts'.⁴ Luke sent them back to Army HQ under escort. But Fleetwood backed Hobson and Beaumont, replying on 21 June that 'They had authority from me to come into your garrison and their worth is so well known to me that I am confident their carriages have been such as could not deserve condemnation... In these times, wherein we expect light from God, our duty is not to force men but to be tender of such as walk conscientiously ... we know not but those who dissent from us may be in the right, and to disturb a saint Christ takes it as done to himself.' Fairfax backed Fleetwood, ordering that the ensign and marshall who had arrested the preachers, and treated them roughly, should be cashiered. On 24 June Hobson and Beaumont returned to Newport Pagnell, armed with another pass from Fleetwood, and appear to have taunted the irascible governor that he had detained them illegally. That day, aiming to appeal to the civil authorities, Luke, himself member for Bedford, wrote to Richard Knight, MP for Northampton.

Knight was able to involve Parliament, for the Commons had assumed responsibility for interviewing those that breached the ordinance. Hobson was taken to London,⁵ where 'the businesse was referred to a Committee, who heard and read the Examinations of the Witnesses, and the proofs of the charges against him, but I know not how it came about, in stead of some exemplary punishment, this Hobson was presently at liberty'. Evidently, many committee-men were reluctant to enforce the ordinance. The outcome in these two test cases was unfavourable for those who wanted to stop lay preaching. Since his brush with the Mayor, Lambe had 'preached since more openly and frequently than before'; the Mayor had desisted from arrests on the basis of the ordinance, 'feeling it is in vain'. Similarly, on his release by the Committee of the Commons, Hobson 'preached the very next Lords Day in Moor Fields or thereabouts ...and

³ *Moderate Intelligencer*, 10 (E282/10) 1 – 8 May, 74; *Gang I*, 94-5

⁴ Luke, quoted Greaves, *Saints and Rebels*, 137; Hobson, *Garden Inclosed*, E1188/3, preface; H. Ellis, *Original Letters* ... (3rd ser, vol 4 1846), 264; Tibbutt *Luke*, 735.

⁵ *Tolmie*, 126-7; Greaves, *Saints*, 137-8; Tibbutt *Luke*, 735, 739, 740, 751, 755, 1411, 1612; Ellis *OR*, 254, 260, 262-6. Luke says Beaumont was a 'druggist', (apothecary), (Ellis *OL*, 263); like Hobson, he was probably of Fairfax's regiment: *F-D*, 317, 416, 132

preaches ever since on week dayes and Lords days: every Wednesday in Finsbury fields in Checker-alley in the afternoon he preaches'.⁶

The failure to control lay preaching, and the Independents role in it, encouraged the Presbyterians towards agitation of their own in London. In August 1645, the city ministers petitioned Parliament, and a lay presbyterian petition was presented the following month. The military achievements of the New Model Army tended to neutralise politically the growing conservative Presbyterian alarm, whose most famous literary expression, *Gangrena*, was now under construction. During the tide of military successes in the West, Parliament was persuaded to voice irritation with the demands of Westminster divines that the Houses should 'confirm whatever the Assembly shall propose to us, because haply they are pleased to give it the name of divine right'. Whilst 'toleration of all religious opinions' was unacceptable, Parliament should defend 'the modest request and reasonable relief of tender consciences'. Thus the Erastians' distaste for divine right pretensions. Independency, for its part, offered them a careful division of labour between minister and magistrate. Through gathered churches, the 'Independents in effect unchurched the masses in order to restrict the sacraments and the personal associations of church membership as far as humanly possible to the elect'. 'Under the supervision of the magistrate, not the Presbyterian hierarchy, the parishes still maintained the important function of communicating the Christian gospel to the masses for the gathering of the elect.'⁷ But from the angle of the Presbyterians, their rivals were undermining the parish structure of an authoritative national church, which alone could set up godly ministers and put down itinerant preachers.

Despite Hobson and Knollys, the leaders of the Particular Baptists thought of themselves in the former category. The seven churches' 1644 confession was shortly followed by issue of Daniel Featley's contemptuous account of a dispute he had had with them in October 1642. He called for the 'anabaptists' to be 'severely punished, if not utterly exterminated and banished out of the church and kingdom'. Yet it also made detailed criticisms of the doctrine set out in 1644.⁸ It seems that this decided the Particular Baptist leaders that revision of the confession was required. In February a response was issued by Samuel Richardson: many of Featley's charges were 'drawn out of the impure fountain of divers heretics, in which he laboureth to drown us', but the 'next impression' of the confession would take up his points.⁹ Featley, the long serving vicar of St Mary Lambeth, had been employed by High Commission to confer with conventiclers. He

⁶ *Gang* I, 94-5; *ibid*, 90-1

⁷ HMC 29 *Portland*, I, 297, 300; *Tolmie*, 101

⁸ Featley, *Dippers Dipt*, (1645), E268/11 signed 10 Jan; the two editions of the 1644 confession appear identical, the one used is *The Confession of Faith, of those churches which are commonly (though falsely) called anabaptists* (1644) E12/24, text in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (1959) 153-71.

⁹ Richardson, *Some Brief Considerations on Dr Featley* (1645) E270/22, 6

continued stubbornly to wear the surplice and to use the book of common prayer, and in early 1645, after the discovery of his correspondence with Archbishop Ussher, found himself in the Peter-house. Provoked beyond endurance by his incarceration at the side of the anabaptist Henry Denne, Featley issued his attack on the Baptists, and his fellow inmate released a counter-blast. Though not a Laudian, Featley was a traditionalist anglican clergyman, symbol of all that Baptists were supposed to excoriate, and died before the year was out. Denne must have marvelled when, a few weeks later, the Particular Baptists issued their second confession, which made every effort to meet objections raised by Featley against the first!

This was ironic, but not anomalous.¹⁰ It stemmed from the political algebra of the day. As politicians became more focused upon a framework for settlement, so the need to mobilise a coalition in favour of their respective plans became more urgent. The leading Independents, from Lord Say, and his son Nathaniel Fiennes downwards, were far removed from the tradesmen and artisans who made up the sectarian congregations. These acted as a political counterweight to the Presbyterians entrenched in the London merchant class, but 'middle group' Independents also expressed the views of a strong current amongst the traditional rulers of society.¹¹ Erastian gentlemen like Oliver St John had resented Laudian theocracy and the pretensions of church courts, and viewed Presbyterian ambitions in much the same spirit. They had come to favour constitutional monarchy and moderate episcopacy, with safeguards against royal and prelatial centralism, in which gentlemen's liberties and tender consciences would be safe. Episcopacy was not openly urged, but moderate episcopalianism exerted influence, for it offered a realistic alternative to the rigid Presbyterians to whom most, including moderate anglicans such as Featley, were opposed. Clearly, the Particular Baptist leaders did not want to offend any part of the political coalition which (however reluctantly) sheltered them.

In autumn 1645, Independent successes isolated the more rigid Presbyterians; the moderates were briefly able to take the initiative again. On 18 November the city ministers petitioned for the early establishment of Presbyterianism in London, but many also saw the wisdom of restraint during elections to Common Council. Also in November, the committee for accommodation was revived, and a series of meetings convened, including one at Distaffe Lane on 1 December, involving 'some members of the several sects, some Seekers, some Anabaptists, some Antinomians' and independents, including John Price of John Goodwin's influential

¹⁰ D. Featley, *Dippers*, epistle; that the confession was changed in response to his criticism was established by McGlothlin, 'Dr Featley and the first Calvinistic Confession', *Review and Expositor*, (Oct 1909), 579-89; Featley famously remarked that 'they cover a little ratsbane in a great quantity of sugar so that it may not be discerned', Featley, *Dippers*, 220; his objections (ibid, 220-5) concerned articles 31, 38-41 and 45.

¹¹ M. Mahoney, 'Presbyterianism in the City of London, 1645-7', *HJ* 22(1) (1979), 93-114; D. Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, (1971), 61-5, 71-2.

congregation; 'some Presbyterians also met with them'. The purpose was 'to consider how all these might have the liberty of their way and practice... and to persuade the Presbyterians to be willing to it'. It has been convincingly suggested that Stephen Marshall, who favoured accommodation, must have been involved, and that Baillie's reference to his frequent 'dealing with the anabaptists' is a reference to this.¹² The Independents talked not just with Particular Baptists, but with people which the latter thought an embarrassment. It was these radicals who were pressing them towards a general toleration.

Meanwhile, the Particular 'anabaptists' had recruited a new member, Benjamin Coxe. An ordained clergyman and Oxford MA, he was quickly drawn into the leadership. In late 1645, together with Kiffin and Knollys, he was selected to take part in a public dispute over infant baptism with leading Presbyterian divines. This arose initially because of the doubts of an unnamed London merchant; private consultations with Edmund Calamy and a Baptist having failed to resolve them, it was agreed to reconvene at the house in Old Jewry of John Mascall, a merchant friend of Calamy. News of the coming confrontation was evidently spread around and on the day, the street 'was so thronged by the multitude there assembled, that the disputants could not enter the house'.¹³ The principals adjourned to Calamy's home, and there agreed to request that the dispute be allowed to reconvene on 3 December at 'the public meeting house of Aldermanbury' (ie the Church). Knollys and Coxe were episcopally ordained ministers; their opponents were Calamy (rector of St Mary Aldermanbury), James Cranford (the licenser) and Thomas Porter, signatories of the ministers petition (18 November) for the early establishment of Presbyterianism in London. Given that these men were willing, the Mayor gave his permission. However, it seems that a rumour was then put about that the Baptists 'intended to manage that dispute with our swords, clubs and staves' and that Calamy would be lucky to escape with his life. As a result, the Mayor prohibited the dispute, because of the 'hazard of the disturbance of the public peace', and sought to evade responsibility for the decision by protesting the need to consult Parliament over the matter.¹⁴ The Baptists had forced the discussion into the public arena; but this enabled elements on the Presbyterian side to exploit conservative fears over public order, and thus to sabotage the debate. Opponents included Baillie, who complained on 29 November against 'the anabaptists, the greatest and most prevalent sect here. In tumultuous ways they

¹² Tolmie, 128-9, here citing *Gang* I, 14-15, 83-4; III, 161-2; Baillie, *ATFI*, 49.

¹³ Coxe, etc, *A Declaration concerning ... Aldermanbury 3rd Dec 1645* (1645), E313/22, *The Lord Mayor's Farewell*, E355(6), 1-3: 'that high place of Aldermanbury', 'one of the City temples'.

¹⁴ Coxe, etc, *A Declaration*, 6-7; *The Lord Mayor's Farewell*. E355(6) dated 20 Sept 1646 (*ibid*, 8); six disputants named, cf Tolmie, 61; *Gang* I, 54-57, Goodwin, *Cretensis*, 46 and *The Fallacy of Infants Baptism Discovered*. (1645)E311/18; Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, Tai Liu, *PL*, 74-5, 79, 80, 109, 160; for Coxe's later career, R. Greaves, *John Bunyan and English Nonconformity*, (1992), 74, 79, 96

provoke our ministers to public disputations'. Enraged at the rebuff, the Baptist leaders pressed for the promised debate for months, alleging bad faith on the mayor's part. The furore may itself have hastened the political shift in December.¹⁵ Anyway, by the turn of the year, debate was superfluous in an atmosphere in which one side had become determined to suppress the other.

On 1 January 1646, *A Letter of the Ministers of the City of London*, was presented to the House in which the Independents (now seen as part of the problem) were charged to 'draw and seduce our members from our Congregations'. On 15 January the aldermen and common council presented 'a strong petition for settling of Church government, and suppressing of all sects, without any toleration'. And now, the Particular Baptists issued a new statement with which they hoped to cement old friendships and influence suspicious minds. On 26th January, Benjamin Coxe and Samuel Richardson arrived at the House of Commons with sheaves of the new confession to distribute to the Members.¹⁶

2 The Confession Revised

The revision of the 1646 confession registered in several retreats the importance of the ideas represented by Featley. Article 41 was rephrased in response to his objection to the notion of 'preaching disciples'. Though lay members appear entitled to baptise, Benjamin Coxe, in his appendix, suggested in an ambiguous formulation that it meant only the special members who had originated the ordinance.¹⁷ The 1644 edition had argued that ministers 'should live on the gospel'; their maintenance was 'not by constraint to be compelled from the people by a forced law' (art 38). Though part of a sentence dealing with the relationship of baptist ministers to their own congregations, these final words amounted to a condemnation of compulsory maintenance and a resolution not to participate in it. In his response, Featley pretended the Baptists were arguing for a national ministry based on voluntary contributions. He affected to concede that this would be fine in principle but if parishioners refused to make contributions, it would be wrong if 'pastors should have no assistance of Law to recover them.' The 1646 editors met his objection by removing the phrase about the national ministry, substituting a clause which could refer either to private or public affairs: ministers 'should live of the gospel by the law of Christ'. Of this McGlothlin remarked that 'Dr Featley could have signed it without hesitation or reservation'.¹⁸ Featley had also criticised the lack of recognition of the role of the ministry of the law in advance

¹⁵ *Baillie* 2, 327; *Tolmie*, 136; Edwards defended the Mayor's behaviour as conscientious: *Gang* III, 175.

¹⁶ *Baillie* 2, 341-3, 337; Tai Lui, *Discord* 52-3; Shaw, *History*, I, 273, 282-3, 284; *CJ* 4, 420-1

¹⁷ Coxe, *An Appendix to a confession of faith* (1646), 9-10

¹⁸ References are to *The Confession of Faith*, (1644) E12/24, and *A Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations* (Simmonds ed., 1646), reprinted, Underhill, *Confessions of Faith*, 27-48; Featley, *Dippers*, 222; McGlothlin, 'Featley', 588

of the saints finding faith; the changes to article 31 were designed to meet such objections. Article 21 was completely rewritten. A statement that salvation was open to all those who believed was expunged, evidently because it could be read as making the former a consequence of the latter. A statement that the gospel should be preached to all men was also omitted, probably as any means to disown Lambe's congregation for whom it was central. The clause as rewritten was a reaffirmation that only some could enjoy Christ.

However, the 1646 confession did not represent a shift to the right compared to its predecessor, or even simply substitute a more rigorous Calvinist theology.¹⁹ Man no longer appears 'upright' before the fall, but the omission of any specific reference to children born (and dying) in sin is not rectified (article 4), and fore-ordainment to reprobation remained only implicit (article 3). Baillie protested at the antinomian tenor of formulations (eg article 25) which 'expressly exclude the necessity of the Laws Ministry to bring the soul to any repentance'. Conceding that it 'seems to reject clearly enough all the five articles of the Arminians', he complained that in some respects the new confession was worse than the old. Clauses 'which point blank did militate against Arminianism' in 1644 had been revised in an unsatisfactory direction: in article 17, the word 'only' had been removed from the phrases 'only the elect', and in article 19 'Christ by his death did bring forth salvation and reconciliation only for the elect', the words 'and reconciliation only' had been excised. The general drift of the doctrinal changes, however, was certainly in the direction of 'orthodoxy'. Baillie was clearly motivated by hostility to the authors: he detected a 'further inclination to Arminianism' amongst the 'Leaders of these seven churches, at the time of their second subscription more than appeared at the first', noting that Spilsbury had published against 'the Arminian errors so troublesome among his friends.'²⁰

In theology, the Baptist leaders were anxious to demonstrate more clearly their basic orthodoxy in relation to general redemptionists and others. But the document also reflected a growing unwillingness to accommodate Presbyterian demands, a higher degree of confidence amongst Independents, and a mood more receptive to religious toleration. The commitment to inter-congregational discipline is weakened: in 1644, individual churches could rely on 'The help of one another in all needful affairs of the church', but in 1646 is added 'if necessity require it'. Perhaps the earlier form was thought to smack of presbyterian centralism. But more difficult to explain is the down-grading of congregational powers. In the first edition, those with 'gifts being tried in the church, may and ought by the appointment of the congregation to prophesy' (art 45), but in 1646 'by the appointment of the congregation' is omitted. Now this was partly designed to

¹⁹ Featley, *Dippers*, 221; an addition to article 4 seems also to respond to this stricture; cf *Tolmie*, 63-4

²⁰ Baillie, *ATF*, 96, 93-4; Baillie referred to Spilsbury (ibid 93) as 'the chief penner as it seems of that writ' (ie the 1644 confession); but the work referred to here was Spilsbury's *God's Ordinance* E335/17(1646)

downplay the status of prophets (as a response to Featley). But it was more than this. In 1644 (art 42) the power of the keys (admission and excommunication) was granted ‘to every particular congregation, and not one particular person, either member or officer, but the whole’; this was softened in 1646 to ‘...member or officer, in relation to the whole body’. In 1644 ‘every particular member of each church, how excellent, great or learned soever ought to be subject’ to church censure (defending its rightness), but in 1646 he ‘is subject’ to it (neutrally stating present practice). In 1644 the church ‘ought with great care... proceed against her members’, but now it ‘ought not’ to proceed against them ‘without great care’ (art 43).

These semantic changes all point in the same direction. They may reflect a growing understanding (outside high Presbyterian circles) of the impossibility of reimposing ideological uniformity, and perhaps something of the growing sense (related, but not reducible, to antinomianism) that ‘the root of the matter’ was not to be found in formal discipline. Political pressure to demonstrate control over recalcitrant individual members may also have slackened. At the time of the first edition, the seven churches of London were indistinguishable from more scandalous anabaptists; by 1646 their confessions had still not passed ideological muster with Baillie and his colleagues. But this mattered less politically than did their peaceable record, the political and theological moderation of their pronouncements, their respectable friends amongst the independents, and their disavowal of the more exotic of their co-religionists. In London the seven churches were part of the political and religious furniture. No less a man than John Goodwin defended their conduct in the matter of the debate with Calamy.²¹

The edition reflects greater confidence than had its predecessor. In line with political developments, the articles on magistracy marked an abrupt shift from the timid positions of 1644, which had not dared to set out the duty of the magistrate in any area. Religious toleration had then been a matter of the magistrate’s good grace; it recognised ‘ecclesiastical laws which might be conceived by them to be their duties to establish’. Now, however, textual authority [Eccles. 8: 12] was mobilized for the view (art 48) that ‘it is the magistrate’s duty to tender the liberty of men’s consciences... and to protect all under them from all wrong, injury, oppression and molestation.’ Of course, it was stressed that baptist subjects had a duty to obey, but the limits of that obedience were set more narrowly: ‘we believe it to be our express duty, especially in matters of religion to be fully persuaded of the lawfulness of what we do, as knowing “whatsoever is not faith is sin”’. If the magistrate insisted on obedience in actions against their conscience they would ‘yield our persons in a passive way to their power’. These were terms with which the Independents could fully agree. The signatories assert (article 49) their right to meet for religion: ‘we dare not

²¹ J. Goodwin, *Cretensis*, 46

suspend our practice, because we believe we ought to go on in obedience to Christ' in it. Yet despite the statements on liberty of conscience in article 48, the preface suggested that some consciences were to be afforded more liberty than others. Those holding 'free will, falling away', etc, might suspect that those who complained of being identified with them in order to 'make us odious in the eyes of all that behold us' would not be in the front line of the struggle for their right to hold odious views.

The authors of the new Confession also felt able to affirm decisively (art 39) a closed communion policy, despite the recent rebaptism (29 June) of their close friend, the influential Henry Jessey. Jessey had delayed for many months: 'because I would do nothing rashly; I would do nothing which I would renounce again: I desired conference with some Christians differing therein in opinion from me, about what is requisite to restoring of ordinances, if lost; especially in what is essential in a baptiser? Thus I did forbear and inquired above a year's space'. The advice referred to, which Jessey eventually rejected, was that offered in 'many conferences with his honoured and beloved brethren', including the influential independents, Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Jeremiah Burroughs and William Greenhill. The discussion centred upon the attitude to those of the Jessey church who had come to accept believers' baptism. Jessey was still unclear about the meanings of some of the relevant scriptures in 1650, hoping for 'further light' upon them; he maintained his open membership principles until his death in 1663.²² Its insistence on closed membership prevented him from signing the Confession, but he maintained close relations with the Particular Baptist leaders.

Knollys was the most notable addition to the signatories. Probably he welcomed the relaxation of inter-congregational control in the 1646 version and the introduction of sentiments less submissive to the magistracy. Also, by this time, the ideological argument with the general baptists was in full swing. Knollys surely saw the need for a concerted policy against them. Former ministers, trained in such matters, were prominent in the defence of orthodox Calvinism. In 1646 Knollys wrote the foreword to a work by Robert Garner (possibly an elder in his church) directed chiefly against the General Baptists Lambe and Denne. Defenders of orthodoxy, whether Presbyterian, Independent or Baptist, were anxious at the tide of novelties now threatening to engulf them. Garner's work, thought Knollys, was 'seasonable .. when so many are doubting and wavering in their judgement, concerning the doctrine of redemption'.²³ For Baillie 'the late confession of the seven churches seems to reject clearly enough all the five articles of the

²² *TBHS* 1, 245; H. Jessey, *A Storehouse of Provision*, (1650), 13-16, 80; B. White, 'Henry Jessey, A Pastor in Politics'; idem, 'Henry Jessey in the Great Rebellion'; [E. Whiston], *Life and Death of Henry Jessey*, (1671)

²³ R Garner, *Mysteries Unvailed* (1646); White, *HKRD*, 13

Arminians; but as our former witnesses testify, thousands of them care not for that confession'; for 'these seven congregations cannot prescribe, and are no ways leaders to a great number of Anabaptists churches over all the land'.²⁴ This was indeed the rub. The House was persuaded to have the Sergeant at Arms arrest Coxe and Richardson and confiscate their copies of the Confession. After interviewing the two men, members repudiated the licence granted by John Downham, and ordered the Stationers to suppress it.²⁵

3 Radicalism of the Evangelists, 1646-7

Our knowledge of the Baptists in this period owes much to a very hostile source, Thomas Edwards, and his informants. *Gangraena* was published at the end of the month following the second Confession of Faith, and both reflected and reinforced the shift to more vigorous and populist political campaigning. Attacking the sects 'on social rather than dogmatic grounds by attacking schism rather than heresy', it sought to exploit conservative fears of the effect of sectarianism on public order, property, and the family.

A merchant revealed that of the four members of his household, he alone was attached to a parish church: 'my wife was one of Mr Jessey's church', but had fallen off from it, whereas 'my maidservant is of Paul Hobson's', and his male servant attended a company of young separatists or baptists, who sang no psalms. The resonance of such concerns is reflected in a complaint against Oates from Rutland the following year he 'Carrieth women about with him' so that they are away from families and husbands for '2 or 3 weeks together'. Prynne called attention to 'nocturnal conventicles, without their husbands, parents, masters privy, the better to propagate Christs Kingdom and multiply their godly party'. Edwards devoted much space to two women, a Mrs Attaway 'that sells Lace in Cheapside and dwells in Bell Alley in Coleman St', and a gentlewoman, 'a Major's wife living in the Old Baily': 'the Lace woman, at the upper end of the Table, turned her self first to this Gentlewoman (who was in her hoods, necklace of Pearle, watch by her side, and other apparell suitable) and intreated her to begin, extolling her gifts and great abilities; this Gentlewoman refused to begin, pleading her weakness; and extolling this Lacewoman who ... replied again ... her gifts were well known, but the Gentlewoman refused it again, falling into a commendation of the gifts of the Lacewoman'. Finally, it was Mrs Attaway who preached first to the company. Conservative readers were invited here to survey the appalling consequences of allowing the unlearned, even plebeian women, to rank people by their 'gifts', irrespective of social status; the repeated stress upon the social gap between the two women, and the lingering,

²⁴ Baillie *ATFI*, 93, 18

²⁵ *CJ4*, 420-1; *Tolmie*, 64

almost prurient account of the process by which the proper order was inverted, stripping the shy, refined gentlewoman of the respect due to her, is of exceptional interest.

When Mrs Attaway had been a preacher in Lambe's congregation she encouraged comments and objections at the end of her sermons, 'for it was their custom to give liberty in that kind'. But she left the organisation and it was reported on 26 February 1646 that she had decamped to Jerusalem with William Jenney, another woman's husband, 'and a preacher too'. In the third part of *Gangraena* there appear more exotic heresies, and it would seem that this reflected a real shift. Of course, disillusion with formally constituted churches was already well underway. Once a member of Lambe's congregation, Mrs Attaway was now 'in the Wilderness, waitiing for the powring out of the Spirit'.²⁶ Baillie noted in December 1646 that 'Very many of the anabaptists are now turned Seekers, denying the truth of any church upon the earth for many ages past... Church state, or Church ordinance whatever; while God from heaven send new apostles to work miracles and set up churches...'. The later views of these men fall outside the scope of this study, but their abandonment of Baptist views demands some brief account; four, Writer, Clarkson, Coppe and Francis Freeman will perhaps serve as examples.

Writer was a factor in the cloth-market at Blackwell (Bakewell) Hall in Basinghall Street, London. He was no longer a baptist by the end of 1645, having been with Lambe at first, and then in the congregation of Richard Blunt. This, it will be recalled, disintegrated partly because of the incoherence of its views on the basis for re-introducing immersion. Writer 'fell to be a seeker, and is now an anti-scripturist, a questionist and sceptic, and I fear an atheist', one of those who had 'now fallen to deny all things in matters of religion, and held nothing but laboured to plunder men of their faith'.²⁷ On 6 November 1644, Lawrence Clarkson, a tailor, who 'lived about Suffolk and Norfolk' was 'buried under the water', and proceeded to baptize at least eleven people in Suffolk and Norfolk. Imprisoned on 24 January 1645 at Bury, he remained there until promising on 10 July not to 'Dip, or teach for the same; but only wait upon God for a further manifestation of his truth', recanting his beliefs before the committee at the town on the 12th. He was soon convinced of Seeker positions by William Erbury and others.²⁸ Antinomianism fitted well the view that the dispensation of the law had been supplanted altogether by that of the gospel: observance of

²⁶ Tolmie, 136; *Gang* I 116-19, 120-1, 87; W. Prynne, *A Fresh Discovery of some prodigious* (1646) E267/3, ep ded; Betteridge, 'Early Baptists', *BQ* 25 (1974) 204-11, 272-85, 354-78.

²⁷ Baillie, *ATFI*, 97; Wynell, *The Covenant's Plea* (1642), sig Bv; he contributed horse in 1642 and served in the army according to his petition of 27 Nov 1649, (Lindley, *London*, 396); E. Keridge, *Textile Manufactures in Early Modern England*, 214, 216, 218, 238; *Gang* III, 112-3, I, 81-83.

²⁸ Klaiber *Suffolk Baptists*, 18-9, 23; *Gang* I, 72-3; White, *HKRD*, 13; Morton, *The World of the Ranters*, 115-142; for Erbury, *Gang* I, 77-8, III, 89-90; Hill, *WTSUD*, 190-8; B. White, 'William Erbury and the Baptists' *BQ* 23, 114-25; Laurence, *PAC*, 124

church ordinances and set patterns of worship were merely dead forms. During the civil war, Abiezer Coppe had been 'a zealous anabaptist; when I was preacher to the garrison of Coventry' and 'continued a most zealous re-baptiser many years, and rebaptised more than any one man that I heard of in the country, witness Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, part of Worcestershire etc'. Coppe then 'fell into a trance', and could now argue that he 'can swear a full mouthd oath, and can kiss his neighbour's wife in Majesty and honour'; in this work of 1650, Baxter also referred to Coppe's 'followers, called by some the Ranters, by others the High Attainers.'²⁹

Francis Freeman was a violently anti-clerical Somerset Baptist living at Cossington in January 1647, who supported the Baptists in a public disputation at Doubling in that county in autumn 1646. 'Thou national presbyterian tithe-monger, thou spawn of a bishop, thou that fishest in troubled waters; hear thy sentence: thou has lived this 800 years and upwards, by the sweat of other men's brows: thou shalt now be an husbandman an herdsman.. [and] get thy living by the sweat of thine own brow. Oh, saith he, this is a hard sentence; I cannot work, I have been choicely bred up at the university ... but I tell thee, thou shalt work, or thou shalt not eat ...' Hearing of the Particular Baptist confession of 1646, Freeman wondered whether it contained an affirmation of free-will. If so he would be free to accept or reject it! He later became a Seeker, wrote *Light Vanquishing Darkness* and was drummed out of his regiment as a blasphemer in summer 1650.³⁰ Another Seeker was the antinomian Roger Bacon, earlier attached to the Broadmead congregation in Bristol.³¹ After the fall of the city, Bacon went to London, where he stayed with Lord Saye and Sele, (not with Edward Barber).³²

On 5 February 1646, there took place at Spittle Yard at the north end of Bishopsgate without the Wall, a debate on mortalism of the soul between Thomas Lambe, and a former member Timothy Batte, whose moderator was the brilliant pamphleteer Richard Overton.³³ Many of Thomas Edwards's colourful collection of Separatists, Baptists and the growing range of Socinians, Seekers, mortalists and assorted mystery men, were reported in London and several had served time in the ranks of the evangelical powerhouse led by Thomas Lambe, Samuel Oates, Henry Denne and others. Oates had gone south with Lambe in September, 1645 and gave

²⁹ Baxter, *PSP* 148; Laurence, *PAC*, 112-13; Morton, *WR*, passim

³⁰ F. Freeman, *A Brief Description ... Somerset* (1647), 18, 24; *F-D* 293; Firth, *Cromwell's Army* 307-8, 346-7; Hill, *WTUSD*, 191, 201.

³¹ *Broadmead*, 13, 89, 90, 96; *Gang* 1 93; see N. Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, (1989), esp 8-9

³² The statement (*Gang* I, 96-7) that Bacon 'here in London hath been entertained in the house of a great man, one Barber, an anabaptist about Threadneedle St' should have a full stop after 'great man'. This referred to Say and Sele (Edwards would not have applied it to the tailor Barber), as appears from Bacon's reply, dedicated to Say: 'Mr Edwards, knowing I was in town, and entertained by a great man' had embarrassed 'that great man' with a 'notorious untruth' about Bacon's beliefs; Bacon, *Spirit of Prelacie*, E334 5, 32; cf, *Broadmead*, 281.

³³ *Gang* II, 17-18; held on thanksgiving day for relief of Dartmouth, (ie 5 Feb, Gardiner, *HGCW* iii 60).

sermons at Guildford and Portsmouth. This apprenticeship served, he struck out on his own, in a career of itinerant evangelism which caused acute anxiety to the authorities in several counties, providing on the way much stimulation for the Presbyterian clerical imagination. In Essex, in spring 1646, Oates 'hath been sowing his Tares, Bookmong, and wild Oates in these parts these five weeks without any control, hath seduced hundreds, and dipped many in Bocking River', he was 'a lusty young fellow' who 'traded chiefly with young women and young maids, dipping many of them, though all is fish that comes to his net, and this he did with all boldness, and without all control for a matter of two months'. On 19 February, an Essex Minister reported that Oates 'draws great flocks of people after him without all control. The Constables of Bocking did on the Lords day last disturb them, going among them to press Soldiers, and they used them despitefully, bad them get them to their steeple houses, to hear their Popish priests, their Baal's priests.' At Dunmow, 'some of the town' discovered Oates, 'fetchd him out of the house, and threw him in the river, thoroughly dipping him.' But in January at Billericay, he had been well protected. At a lecture there, 'when the minister had done preaching, went up in a body some twenty of them (divers having swords) into the upper part of the Church, and there quarrelled with the Minister that preached ... saying to him, he had not preached Free grace'; 'after this they came up through the Town in a body together, divers of them having swords, and carrying themselves insolently; and upon this occasion some of the Town meeting them, and they falling out there was a riot committed, and some of them being brought to Chelmsford at a Sessions it was found a riot, and they were proceeded against....'³⁴

There is no confirmation of this. But the Bocking events did provoke a reaction. At Chelmsford Sessions on 16 March 1646, 'Samuel Oates of St Thomas, London, woosted weaver' appeared together with John Hutchinson a draper of Braintree, and Nathaniel Tyers, a Bocking clothier, charged with 'unlawful assembling of divers people together in Braintree and Bocking in disturbance of the peace and contempt of authority'. Imprisoned in Colchester gaol, Oates was visited by many friends from London, some in coaches, which may suggest that support was by no means confined to the lower reaches of 'the middling sort of people'.³⁵ In April, Oates was acquitted of causing the death of a young woman by immersing her in a river; her mother was later reported to have testified that she had died of dropsy. At Terling, in June, he debated with John Stalham, who also recalled a sermon by Oates 'at the corner of a corn field in our town'.³⁶

³⁴ *Gang* I, 93; II, 3-4; III, 105-6; I, 120, 182

³⁵ E. R. O., QSR 328/75; *Gang* II 147 says he appeared 7 April 1646.

³⁶ *Gang* II, 147-8; III, 105-6; case not listed in N.O'Farrell, 'Calendar of the Essex Assize records in the PRO', vol iii (1646-59); Drapes, *Plain and faithful* (1646) E350/22, 13; Stalham, *Vindiciae* (1647) E384 10, prefaces, sig A3, sig B2

On 29 June he disputed for several hours with Ralph Josselin, vicar of Earls Colne, and the following morning commenced three days of exercises at Chelmsford, despite his brush with the justices there a few weeks earlier. In October, he was staying at Sandon, near Chelmsford, when accused of having 'riotously assembled at the house of Monk outside the church under colour and pretext of an exercise of religion.'³⁷ Despite these efforts, the law appeared powerless to stop his activities, which created panic amongst some ministers: 'The tide of schism runs strong ... [The sects] they grow formidable. Our Magistrates are afraid of them, only a few Orthodox Ministers hazard themselves to oppose this torrent'.³⁸

The panic was not entirely irrational. A notable feature of *Gangraena* III is the growing concern with army preachers, including those, like Hobson, John Webb and John Hewson who were not employed as chaplains. In a period where control of the state is disputed, the army is the law. When the soldiers began their historic efforts to define the rules, who could be relied upon to enforce order? Already, civilian activists were finding arguments for their activities not only in what they took to be the law of God, but also in more general conceptions of justice, and natural or common law rights. When Andrew Wyke was brought before the Suffolk county committee, he refused on principle to answer questions in relation to charges, 'saying, I am a free man, and not bound to answer any interrogatory either to accuse myself or any other'; committed to prison on June 3 1646, he was yet able to issue a pamphlet defending himself and upbraiding the committee as persecutors.³⁹ Edwards was worried and angry about the activities of Lambe and his followers in neighbouring counties, but he was nonplussed at the conduct tolerated at Bell Alley: 'Many use to resort to this Church and meeting, the house, yards full, especially young youths and wenches flock hither, and all of them Preach universal redemption. In their Church meetings and Exercises there is such a confusion and noise, as if it were at a Play.'

It might be thought that the Particular Baptists would seek to avoid such scenes by not opening meetings to the public, thus preventing disorderly and inconvenient interventions, and the accusations of turbulence which might follow. Yet Edwards also reported that around August 1645, Knollys, 'in the heart of London, in great St Helens, next door to the public church, keeps in the time of public worship his meetings, where for a long time great resort was made to him, some of the neighbours having told me, that according to their estimation they could not judge the numbers less then 1000, which many days resorted thither; and after his landlord would suffer him to stay no longer, now in Finsbury Fields is set up, and hath made a great meeting house by

³⁷ A. MacFarlane, ed., *Diary of Ralph Josselin* (1976), 63; Essex sessions, cited in G. Witard, *Bibles in Barrels. A History of the Essex Baptists*, (1962). 28

³⁸ *Gang* II, 4; I, 120

³⁹ *Gang* III, 169-170; A Wyke, *The innocent in Prison complaining* (1645); *Gang* I, 93

breaking one room into another...' Perhaps the first building referred to was owned by the Leathersellers Company, whose hall was almost adjacent to St Helens, Bishopsgate; Kiffin and others were members of the company.

Edwards attacked Knollys for antinomianism and noted his following amongst soldiers. In Suffolk, he had not only preached 'strange doctrine, but in such a tumultuous, seditious, factious way, (going as I have been informed) with some armed men accompanying him, and preaching in the churchyard, when he could not in the church, and getting up the Pulpits when the Sermon or Lectures had been ended, against the will of the Minister and Parish, so that there were several Riots and tumults by his means'.⁴⁰ On 20 May Knollys was reported to the Westminster Assembly for 'his preaching in private, and venting his antinomian opinions', (not for anabaptism), and about the same time, he was examined by the Committee of Examinations. This occasioned his account of an incident on 14 February 1645, in *Christ Exalted in a sermon begun to be preached at Debenham in Suffolk... By Hanserd Knollys. Who was stoned out of the pulpit (as he was preaching) by a company of rude fellows, and poor women of that town: who were gathered together and set on by a malignant high constable who lives in the same town*. Here, Knollys stressed both the violence of the 'rude fellows and poor women' and also his own commitment to law, order and orthodoxy, which was fully in tune with the objectives of 'the honourable ctte of examinations.' To them, he admitted that 'It may be judged an act of great boldness in me, who am under examination of this honourable ctte, to dedicate my labours at Debenham and Stradbrook, to your patronage'. But his preaching had been misrepresented, and hence the publication of 'the sum and substance of all I preached in Suffolk', concerning the saint, who is 'redeemed in the spirit of his mind, and has put on the new man'.

Knollys explicitly identified General Baptists with the ultra-radicalism developing around them, supplying an early portrait of some of its chief features, in terms of which the Committee itself might have been proud: 'all those carnal professors who say they are the people of god, and hold the common faith... notwithstanding all this profession of general redemption, they themselves are the servants of corruptions... For they take liberty to live in sin, and walk after the flesh, fulfilling the lusts thereof; turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God .. they question whether the scriptures of truth be the word of God? Whether Christ be

⁴⁰ Gang I, 93, 40, 97-8; Leathersellers, 'Register of Freeman 1630-94', and 'Register of Apprentices, 1629-77': probably John Mabbett (free by patrimony 16 Oct 1632, p3), and perhaps Richard Blunt (see ch 5) were freemen of the Leathersellers. Notable possibilities include 1) William Disher, son of John Disher, of Spandwicke Hunts apprentice to Thos Parry for 8 years, 23 Nov 1637, free of Parry, Jan 20 1645, 28, 2) John Spencer, son of Basil Spencer late leatherseller and citizen of London apprenticed to Wm Spencer from 14 July 1635 for 8 years and freed 23 July 1644, 26; 3) William Rider free of Henry Baker, 15 January 1632, 2; and 4) Josias Primate free of William Miller, 15 Oct 1633, 6.

the Son of God? Whether the first day of the week be the sabbath of God? ... And as for sin, they make a mock at it; some of them say God takes no knowledge of their sins, he sees no iniquity amongst them; others affirm that they have no sin, they are born of God, and they cannot sin. And some others are bold, to say, they are justified persons, and therefore all their words and actions are alike acceptable to God.' And yet, Knollys also disclosed worrying traits amongst people he acknowledged as 'my brethren': 'when we meet together... we are apt to speak slightly, rashly, formally, inconsiderately, and not soberly, humbly and graciously, as becomes the saints. Yea, our conferences sometimes turn to vain jangling and unedifying disputes, wherein we strive for victory, or to maintain our own opinion'.⁴¹ But these were private shortcomings. The work's account of other baptists' behaviour positively invited their suppression, both on doctrinal and civil grounds. Knollys, of course, thought himself neither seditious nor doctrinally unsound. In 1646, however, he contributed a foreword to Thomas Collier's *Exhaltation*, which advocated toleration, and his letter to Norwich alluded disapprovingly to Sion College's having written 'against any toleration'. This may indicate that he, like Blackwood and others, was influenced by the tide in its favour.

In 1646, it was reported that he 'preaches up and down in Severall Churches in London and Southwark, and that with all fierceness against Children's Baptisme', notably on 15 November 'at Georges Church in Butolphe Lane in the afternoone'. Knollys also appeared before the Leigh Committee in early February 1647.⁴² From all this it appears that his willingness to get involved in rowdy scenes stemmed from a combination of Knollys's desire to contest for the truth, at which he had so painfully arrived, even at the risk of disturbances and imprisonment. In his defiance, and in the vigour of his defence of theological orthodoxy, he resembled rather the combative Presbyterians than more cautious individuals like William Kiffin. Kiffin did not take part in the literary campaign against the General Baptists led by Coxe and Knollys; generally, he seems to have thought a quiet and sober approach rather than zeal in the cause of orthodoxy would carry more weight with political allies.⁴³ The point should not be pressed too far, however. Kiffin toured at least in Kent, where he seems to have been involved in an ill-tempered debate, about June 1646, with an Independent John Turner 'who disputed (as some say) with Kiffin and drowned him in the red sea, till at last they fell both from reasoning to down right railing.'

In Kent, where the Cornwell/Jeffrey General Baptists had made converts, there was rivalry between them, Lambe's emissaries, and the Particular Baptists I heard last week at an

⁴¹ *Gang III*, 241, 48-9; *M-S Minutes*, 96; *Hinc Illae Lachrymae* E421/6, 3, 9.

⁴² *Christ Exalted ...* (1645), E322(23), Td 16 May, A2v, 18-19; Blackwood, *Storming*, 83

⁴³ Spilsbury, *God's Ordinance* (E335 17) Td 4 May, to which Coxe was a major contributor, Coxe, *Appendix* (1646); Garner, *Mysteries Unveiled*, foreword by Knollys

open ordinary in presence of two of our deputy lieutenants that since Kiffen and Lamb have been here rebaptising, now there a third man come that contradicts them both, and rebaptiseth again'. This suggests that all three tendencies were active in the county by July 1646. In December 1645, (and perhaps before), Thomas Lambe and Henry Denne (who had been born in the county at Ickham) had been active around Rochester where 'in a house upon the fast day, Den preached to about eight score': 'in his travels also he dipped many'. Denne also thought 'that ministers must work with their hands, and follow some worldly calling; and ...hath driven a cart upon the high way to London, he was seen to do it and met upon the way.' Probably, Lambe and Denne clashed here with Coxe, now a Particular Baptist, for Lambe recalled his advocacy of limited atonement, warning of the consequences 'if you restrain it from any person, as you did in your preaching at Strood, near Rochester'.⁴⁴ Here as in Suffolk, there were radical elements gathering around the Baptists. Lambe and Nicholas Woodman were alleged to have preached at the house of Cozens, charged with blasphemy. As high on the scale of outrage were the reports of a woman who 'preaches often' in Kent, 'an anabaptist, who sometimes at Brasted and other times at Westrum [Westerham]... doth meet other women, and after she hath preached she takes the bible and chooses a text', proceeding to expound its meaning.⁴⁵

The reporter of the re-baptisms was the Quaker and former Particular Baptist Luke Howard, who recalled 'a great contest betwixt the General, as Lamb, Barber, and those that held the universal love of God to all, and Kiffen, Patience, Spillman [sic], and Colyer, and those that held the particular election; so that if any of the particular men or women of the Seven Churches aforesaid, did change in their opinions from the Particular to the General, that then they were to be baptised again, because (said they) you were baptised into a wrong faith... whereupon several denied their belief and baptism, and were baptised again into the General opinion or belief.'⁴⁶ It is clear from this that 'the great contest' was not a single set piece debate (which may not have taken place), but a continuing rivalry. Howard claimed here that new baptisms had been required only of those moving from Particular to General, not vice versa. The Generals probably insisted that baptism was invalid except into a faith in universal atonement, a condition adopted by Lambe about early 1645 and taken up by Denne at Fenstanton; but perhaps the Cornwell-Jeffrey group insisted upon a baptism with the laying on of hands.⁴⁷ By summer 1646 Baptists of all tendencies seem to have made great strides in Kent: William Hussey, minister of Chislehurst, noted that 'this

⁴⁴ *Gang* III, 77-80; *Venn*, sub Henry Denne; *Gang* I, 181; Lamb, *Christ Crucified*, A6v.

⁴⁵ *Gang* II, 125, 24-5, 106

⁴⁶ *A Looking Glasse for Baptists*, (1672), 3-6: its polemical violence against Baptists must suggest caution.

⁴⁷ I.E., *The Anabaptists Groundwork for Reformation* (1644) 23, refers to 'T.L.' ie Lambe, and others who 'baptise some that have been twice baptised before', probably the immersion of those earlier affused.

doctrine of the Anabaptists doth much spread, notwithstanding all the industry that hath been used by men of singular parts and piety'. Hussey wondered why they had 'so much prevailed with the multitude'. 'But whilst I saw this humour, wandering in the lower regions of the unlearned, I did not so much wonder, though I was much moved for their sakes because their souls were as pretious to me as other mens, but when I heard that it soared aloft among the learned, I thought it then high time to bestir myself...'⁴⁸

4 The confessional struggle and religious toleration, 1646 - March 1647

In the confessional struggle of 1644–47, fortune ebbed and flowed, but over time, encouraged by the growing opposition to Presbyterian commanders within the New Model, and the support of officers such as Cromwell, opinion strengthened amongst Independents and Erastians for a broad toleration. The Apologeticall Narrators became less apologetic. For Jeremiah Burroughs, while men 'think the civil sword is an ordinance appointed by God to determine all controversies in Divinity, and that men must be chained together by fines and imprisonments, or else there can be no peace... while these principles prevail with men, either there must be a base subjection of mens consciences to slavery, a suppression of much truth whilst they seek to suppress error, or else exceeding disturbance in the Christian world.'⁴⁹

Throughout 1646, Presbyterians continued to try to establish an enforceable national system of worship, and the Independents tried to ensure that Parliament retained powers in religion and used them as sparingly as possible. Accommodation was no longer practical politics, and the sects continued to gain ground in London and the Army. In March Baillie complained against 'blasphemous heresies are now spread here more than ever in any part of the world' but that the Independents 'are not only silent, but are patrons and pleaders for liberty almost to them all'; the sects were the problem: 'we have spent many sheets of paper upon the toleration of their separate churches'. A major literary controversy was sparked by *Gangraena*, and a second, more abstruse, was provoked by John Tombes, whose ecclesiological sympathies were Presbyterian, but who now rejected infant baptism. His learned work drew the chief orthodox divines of the city, who had refused to debate with the baptists proper, into printed defences of paedobaptism.⁵⁰ In April, following the failure to silence the socinian Paul Best, a Commons committee was set up to prepare a bill against heresies and blasphemies, and the following month the Mayor and Aldermen of the City issued their Humble Remonstrance and Petition, demanding the suppression of Baptist and Separatist congregations; Parliament registered irritation with its importunacy. A

⁴⁸ W.Hussey, *An Answer to Mr Tombes* (1646) E343(2) Td 6 July, A3

⁴⁹ J.Burroughs, *A Vindication*, (1646) E345(14), 30

⁵⁰ Baillie2, (17 March 1646), 361; J.Tombes, *Two Treatises .. Infant Baptism* E312 1 2

series of Presbyterian petitions and Independent counter-petitions seeking to neutralise them followed in London during the summer. The ordinance on heresy framed by the commons in September provided that those (amongst others) having heterodox opinions on free will, infant baptism, and the eucharist were to be liable to imprisonment; this was unenforceable, not least because the authoritative Confession of Faith against which opinions might be measured was many months away. The bill's opponents responded with amendment and obstruction.⁵¹

All Baptists, of course, must have understood that a rigid and theocratic Presbyterianism would be most unlikely to allow them to worship freely. Knollys wrote to Norwich on 13 January 1646 that 'The City Presbyterians have sent a letter to the Synod... against any toleration... But God will doubtless answer them according to the idol of their own hearts.' Outside the leadership of the seven churches, there were several who were prepared to voice in print the strongest opposition to Presbyterian ambitions. The *Last Warning to the Inhabitants of the City of London* contained an early statement of republican principles, urging 'a more just and rational way of Government than that of Kings'. According to Edwards, 'One Barber, an Anabaptist, boasted two days after the book came forth that the book "had cut the legs of the Presbyterian govt"'; Baptists were also distributing it, 'as for instance Samuel Fulcher an Egg man, rebaptised by one Crab, a felt maker, was the 21 March examined before a justice of the peace for spreading this book .. and confessed he had sold six or seven of them'.⁵² He is probably to be identified with the 'old and bold blasphemous schismatic, commonly called the Chicken-man', who appeared before the Committee of Examinations in February 1647. Fulcher was probably the General Baptist of those names in Samuel Loveday's congregation in 1660.⁵³ Loveday was a merchant tailor, who on gaining his freedom⁵⁴ appears to have become a journeyman with Edward Barber and probably succeeded him in the pastorate. Loveday and Fulcher, were perhaps members with Barber in 1646.⁵⁵ But Fulcher's baptizer was 'Crab of Southwark side, a dipper and a preacher, who vents strange doctrines against the immortality of the soul', who was reported to the Mayor in summer 1646 for 'speaking words against the King, as that it was better to have a golden calf or ass set up.. than to have a king over them' – sentiments to be found in the republican *Last Warning*.

⁵¹ *Tolmie*, 134-5, Jordan, *RRTE*, 91-2;

⁵² Gang III 48-9; *Last Warning to the Inhabitants* (1646) E382/24, Td 20 March, 1-2; Gang II, 9

⁵³ *Hinc Illae Lachrymae* E421/6, 6; *To the King of these nations*, B.L. 669f26(53), Jan 30 1660, republished Underhill, *Confessions of Faith* (1853), 357-60

⁵⁴ Not the S.L. of St Thomas the Apostle (Dale, *Inhabitants*, 310); he was son of William Loveday of Bomstead Hellens, Essex, scissorer apprenticed to John Hanson of Ironmonger Lane 5 October 1638 (Merchant Taylors Apprentice Bindings, vol 11 p16, Guildhall Micro 316(20)), freed 12 November 1645 (M.T. Court minutes vol 9, Micro 329).

⁵⁵ Guildhall MS 1303/1: St Bennet Finke Vestry Minutes Barber and Loveday appear together on the scavengers roll, Easter 1645, and several times till 1652, when Loveday disappears. He later became a liveryman (3 Oct 1673, M.T. Court Minutes, vol 11, p21, Micro 331), so had probably set up on his own.

A second work, *Conscience Cautioned* appeared in June against the City Remonstrance. It shared many ideas with the *Remonstrance of Many Thousand Citizens*, traditionally seen as the first collective statement of Leveller thinking issued a few days later. *Conscience Cautioned* was against divine ordination to punish, or suppress as such, or as so called, sects, conventicles, etc, or for errors in religion' provided the sects 'live peaceable, if faithful to the state, so if they teach not any thing destructive to particular or universal rights, or the states safety'; 'sure religion establisheth civil rights, as each mans kinghood and priesthood, else is it no right'; it attacks the Scots for not giving up 'the King our state's prisoner' and urges the 'presbyters, and Independents of the clergy' to be not treacherous to the state; it suits not to religion, nor reason nor morality' to hunt down heresy.⁵⁶ The author is unknown, but a baptist seems likely and Jeremy Ives possible.⁵⁷

Collier, in a work received in April 1646, wrote against both episcopacy and Presbyterianism, and rejected the conflict of 'warre and blood' between them; we 'have nothing to do in either side, to compel men to any religion.' But the most immediate danger was the Presbyterians; the following month, he noted with relief the fact that (so far) 'the unlimited power of the Presybterians is denied them'. The leaders of the London Particular Baptists may have agreed. Similar sentiments had been ventured by Knollys in an intercepted letter in January 1646, and in October, Webb was 'very confident that shortly he should see Presbytery laid as low as Prelacy'.⁵⁸ But the leaders did not commit themselves in print in 1646.

5 Politics of the Barber/Cornwell Baptists

Barber's church was probably the first in London to adopt the Laying on of Hands. The Baptists of Kent, the Fenlands and elsewhere, also adopted this practice, which in the mid fifties was connected to a more passive politics, more respectful of priest and magistrate. But the politics of Barber's church in the 1640s was far from passive. His work on baptism of March 1642 was patriotic, with anti-clerical tendencies. In it, he 'measured the reformation in national terms and his heroes were laymen'; radical clergymen who fled abroad, whilst the laymen of Parliament were taking a stand against Laud, are condemned in the spirit of Helwys.⁵⁹ Much the same could be said about the declaration of Lambe's group at the time of their arrest early the year.

⁵⁶ Gang III, 110; *Conscience Cautioned and so set at liberty* (1646), E341/7, Td 20 June, 1, 3, 4, 5.

⁵⁷ The author was a citizen (ibid 9); Ives was a cheese-monger later, it is not known whether he was free of a company. But the work does use the secular conception of citizenship underlying Ives's support for the Levellers. He favoured titles with alliterative or punning devices, eg: *The Corrector Corrected* (1672); *Confidence Encountered* (1658) E936/1; *Innocency above Impudency* (1656), E886/3

⁵⁸ *The Exaltation of Christ*, (1646) Td April 27, 143; Gang III, 51-2, 48-9, 15-16

⁵⁹ Tolmie, 74; Barber, *Small Treatise of Dipping*, (1641) E143/17, A2v

In 1641, it is true, Barber looked forward to the day when ‘They shall break their swords into Mattocks, and their spears into scythes, Nation shall not rise against Nation, neither shall they learn war any more...’. But this was a vision of a future society, not a rejection of struggle in the present. In 1643, Barber saw ‘God stirring up the magistrates to take part with his poor despised saints against their antichristian great opposers, wherein he hath made them his sword to lop off the heads of them already, which we acknowledge with all thankfulness, first to God, and second to them’ – in which enterprise, mattocks may be assumed not to have been the instruments of choice. In the latter broadsheet, Barber and Nutt demanded to be allowed to answer the false accusations against them in front of ‘the doctors of the Synod’, calling on their readers to ‘get in their several parishes as many hands as they can to a Petition to the Parliament for this so reasonable a desire, the which Petition you shall have at M. Barbers in Threadneedle St, at the horse shoe, from Thomas Nutt, one for every parish.’⁶⁰

Thomas Nutt was ‘lately carrier of Norwich’, and in summer 1644 he was living in Angel Alley, Whitechapel.⁶¹ Thomas Bakewell sneered that he was ‘one of the children of the old mouse-catcher, who some years ago, cried mousetraps’, and had become a woodcutter when the trade failed. He accused Nutt of despising magistracy: ‘maintaining wars in our own defence is cause enough for them to cut off magistrates, as also for imposing a covenant for reformation, or an oath of allegiance to Princes: these and such like are great offences that magistrates give to anabaptists, for which, this Nut thinks he may cut them off’.⁶² Nutt wrote two rather vague appeals for a peaceful settlement ‘with the spare of much money now spent, and blood now spilt’ in August 1643. But he also complained that ‘whereas they are accused not to allow of the execution of justice by the sword of the magistrate, they profess, it tis their hearts grief that the justice of their wholesome and good laws are no more strictly executed’ which is as erastian as could be imagined from a Baptist.⁶³ Nutt protested that Bakewell ‘taxeth those to be the despisers of government, who most earnestly long and pray for more strict execution of justice therein.’ He denied opposing magistracy, ‘heartily desired the execution of all civil laws established by the word of God, and grieve that the good laws of England are no better executed.’ It was a lie that he had attacked magistrates ‘for maintaining the wars’ for ‘I have used my utmost endeavours to further their designs, but indeed, with desire of as much spare of blood as might lawfully be.’⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *To the King's most excellent majesty* 669 f4(31); *The Humble request of certain Christians* 669 f8 (27)

⁶¹ *The Nut-cracker Crackt* 1644) E254/11 Td 3 Aug, To the Reader, sig A2r

⁶² T.Bakewell, *A Confutation of the Anabaptists* (1644) E51/20, Gr-G2v

⁶³ *Nineteen Humble propositions for peace* (Wing N1474) and *Nineteen propositions cleared* (E65/28, Td 23 August 1643) are the two appeals, quoted first from N1474. This appears in B.L. 669 f8 (f 51) close to *The humble request* (f 64); *To The Rt Hon House of Commons* follows, (f66), quoted second

⁶⁴ *The Nut-cracker Crackt* (1644) E254/11, A3r

The inauguration of the laying of hands in November 1645 has itself been offered as evidence of the quietism of the Barber congregation, which stood ‘in complete contrast to Lambe’s. Barber avoided the publicity that Lambe sought out.’⁶⁵ Edwards’s witness discovered that ‘the meaning is this, that such persons who now after the laying on of these hands shall have gifts, must be sent to preach into the countries, yea, into the streets openly and publicly, yea to the doors of the Parliament Houses.... and added they agreed to forbear a while from sending them into the streets publicly, and to the Parliament to preach, till they should see how things would go.’ This does indeed seem to show ‘the restraint which characterised this congregation’, an impression given colour by characterising Barber’s altercation with Calamy in 1648 as ‘the only recorded public fracas of his career’.⁶⁶ (Barber had been invited by parishioners of St Benet Fincke to hear Calamy’s sermon, on the understanding that he would be allowed to comment at the end; he says Calamy broke the undertaking and connived at Barber’s being beaten up.) But it could be objected that Lambe himself was involved in no ‘recorded fracas’ in the physical sense. The image of passivity is at odds with Barber’s conflicts with the courts, his early foray into print for believers baptism, his challenges to debate, and his broadsheets already directed at authority; even the account of the laying on of hands ceremony reports a debate over the atonement. The ceremony was taking place in November 1645 at a time when there were hopes for accommodation, so the caution may have been invited by circumstances.

If so, it would help explain the otherwise incredible accusation made only four months later, that ‘One Barber, an Anabaptist boasted’ after the issue of *The Last Warning* that this republican work ‘had cut the legs of the Presbyterian government’.⁶⁷ It was reported to have been produced on the same press as several of Lilburne’s works, by Richard Overton, ‘the printer, publisher and disperser of these libels’. The distributor named, Samuel Fulcher, had been baptized by ‘Crab of Southwark side, a dipper and a preacher, who vents strange doctrines against he immortality of the soul’. Crab was reported in summer 1646, for saying ‘that it was better to have a golden calf or ass set up... than to have a king over them’ and bound over to sessions.⁶⁸ Fulcher might not have been a member with Barber despite the latter’s approval of the work. It may be that Barber’s church lacked evangelical fervour; he was not reported preaching outside London, or linked with anyone who did. He was a Merchant Taylor (a high status company) aged almost fifty, but he certainly made radical statements: in England, despite God’s ‘mercies and deliverances... injustice, pride, cruelty, neglect of the poor, idolatry, covetousness abounds and as

⁶⁵ Tolmie, 78; Barber, *A Declaration and Vindication* (1648) E458/8, Td Aug 12

⁶⁶ Tolmie, 78; Gang I, 105

⁶⁷ *Last Warning to the Inhabitants* (1646) E382/24; Gang II, 9

⁶⁸ HMC 6th Report 130; Gang III, 110

the prophet saith... the love of money is the root of all evil remaining as much as ever'.⁶⁹ He wrote against the Essex ministers who had published against the King's trial, that they had once encouraged men to fight against him. 'But when you saw your honour, riches, and indeed (your all) was lapt up in him, then with Pilate you began to change your notes, and to pretend to wash your hands in innocency saying, "I am clear from this just man."'. Now they feared to lose 'your own mere interests, power, and gain of your goodly fat benefices', along with the tithes, those 'grievous oppressions in the liberties and properties of the subjects.'⁷⁰

Barber's Kentish associates appear never to have been involved in radical agitation.⁷¹ At first, however, they were far from pacifistic in their approach. Francis Cornwell, an ordained minister, revealed that he had also been a 'souldier, that hath hazarded his life for his countries liberties', arguing that the 'national covenant of England and Scotland... bindeth us to stand for a thorough reformation'.⁷² He directed another work to 'poor distressed consciences in the city, country and camp', addressing a preface to the 'honourable, valiant and victorious commander' Cromwell, and 'to all the saints scattered contending for the faith'.⁷³ Christopher Blackwood, in his first book, thought magistrates should have considerable powers in religion: by the 'light of nations', 'those that speak against their god they profess, and against that which they think his scripture ... may be punished by the magistrate, because all or most of the nations in the world do it'. 'For the Jews they are tolerable' but papists 'are least to be borne of all others, because of the uncertainty of their keeping faith with heretics as they call us'; in some circumstances the magistrate could expel them.⁷⁴ Within a few months he thought better of this, explaining that he had chiefly defended magistratical power to deal with those who 'rail against Christ, or deny the scripture'. Others had objected against his stance, and though clearly uncertain, he seems to have acquiesced in these objections: 'though my soul abhor all such opinions, as I do hell, yet I doubt, whether the magistrate have power to deal with any such offender, unless they break the public peace; so that I retract the foresaid distinction'.⁷⁵ His new views, however, were in no sense 'anabaptistical', but reflected the growing commitment to religious toleration amongst Independents and separatists in general.

⁶⁹ Barber, *Answer to the Eight Queries* (1648), 6; the questions, concerning the jure divino status of the proposed disciplinary structure, printed M-S *Minutes*, 225-6

⁷⁰ Barber, *An Answer to the Essex* (E552/9), 2-3

⁷¹ On Kentish Baptists, R. Butterfield, 'The Royal Commission of King Jesus', *BQ* 35 (1993), 56-80.

⁷² Cornwell, *The Vindication* (1644) E10/15, sig A3, 6; he had been 'sometimes student of Emmanuel College in Cambridge' confirming identity with the man admitted there, 20 April 1618 as Cornhill (Venn).

⁷³ Cornwell, *Gospel Repentance Floweth* (1645) E 1176/2, tp and sig A3r.

⁷⁴ C. Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist* (1644) E22/15 Td 28 Dec, 23.

⁷⁵ Blackwood, *Apostolicall Baptism*, (1646) E315 17, 82-3; for Blackwood, Laurence, *PAC* 100, D. Brown, 'Christopher Blackwood', *BQ* 32 (1987), 28-38; Jordan, *RTTE* III, 462-7

It does seem however, that a certain clericalism is visible in the Kentish leaders. Blackwood doubted whether laymen were qualified to baptise: 'All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient. It is sufficient that thou use it in necessities of time, place, persons, because he shall be guilty of the man that is lost, if he shall forbear to perform what freely he might...'. 'I will not derogate from Prophecy, but that some wise and sober minded men may now and then prophecy ...but let men elevate prophecy as high as they please, and degrade ministry as low as they please, yet I fear me I shall prophecy too truly, in saying, the downfall of ministry will be a speedy presage of the ruin of the churches.' And he thought it 'good to walk in a mean, between Presbyteriall and popular engrossment'. Such sentiments would not have been well received by Oates, Lambe, or their followers. Cornwell directed two of his works to fellow ministers.⁷⁶ Whitley thought the Kentish leaders had learned 'the laying on of hands' not from any continental source but from the Anglican ceremony of confirmation, which signified admittance to full membership in the church.

The political significance of the rite should not be reduced to its inherent sacerdotalism. Some saw it as an apostolic ordinance of high significance. In London it was associated with the chiliastic enthusiasm of men such as Thomas Tillam, Peter Chamberlen and John Spittlehouse.⁷⁷ However, broadly, the ceremony did come to be associated with attempts to face down scepticism over formal ordinances, and to discourage political activism. In efforts to exert greater control over lay members, its symbolism was a help, for the rite acted as a visual 'confirmation' not only of the faith of the believer, but of the status of the pastor.⁷⁸

6 Baptists and Independents, 1647

In November 1646, the Independents sought to secure freedom for unordained 'gifted men' to preach, but failed. Soon, the leading Presbyterians began mobilising crowds to put pressure on Parliament; now clearly a Peace party, they also began to articulate demands for drastic reductions in the Army.⁷⁹ On 19 December, a new City Presbyterian petition was presented 'which demanded immediate legislation for the repression of heresy and error', and the Lords

⁷⁶ Blackwood, *SA*, 2nd pagination, 63, 1st pag, 10; Cornwell, *Two Qveries worthy*, E1176(13); idem, 'The New Testament Ratified', in Whittle, *An Answer to Mr Francis Cornwell's positions* (1647) E516/1.

⁷⁷ W. Whitley, 'Salters Hall 1719 and the Baptists' in *TBHS* 5, (1916) 172-89; T. Tillam, *The Fourth Principle... The Laying on of Hands* (1655), E850/9; J. Spittlehouse, *A Confutation .. Samuel Oates* E699/12.

⁷⁸ Fenstanton, 31, 60-70, 128-9, 135-7, 140-3, 156-7, 202-5; H. Danvers, 'A Treatise of Laying on of Hands', appended to his *Treatise of Baptism* (1674); Rider, *Laying on of Hands Asserted* (1656); J. Griffith, *God's Oracle and Christs Doctrine*, (1655); *Humble Representation and Vindication* (1654): version in W. Whitley, *MGA*, I, 1-5 omits crucial afterword 'A Cautionary Word' against political activity.

⁷⁹ On this, Pearl, 'London's Counter-Revolution', in G. Aylmer, *The Interregnum*, (1974), 29-56

obliged with *An Order of the Lords.. for the punishing of Anabaptists and Sectaries* (E367/2) dated 22 Dec 1646. On 31 December, the Commons resolved to reinforce their ordinance against lay preaching, resolving to 'proceed against all such persons as shall take upon them to preach, or expound the scriptures, in any church or chapel, or any other public place, except they be ordained, either here or in some other Reformed church', especially those who 'purposefully interrupt a preacher who is in the public exercise of his function'; offences were to be prevented, and offenders arrested by justices, mayors, sheriffs and other officers of state. This passed by 105-57 and a strong committee was appointed to meet in the Queen's Court to hear complaints, and to examine offenders; on 9 March, it was granted power to imprison the recalcitrant.⁸⁰

Leading members included Tate, Hollis, Cromwell and Fiennes: the divisions in Parliament were reflected in the committee, making it harder to enforce the firm line against the sects which its architects had intended. One Presbyterian recorded in outrage 'the great encouragement and countenancing of the schismatical impiety and disorderly audaciousness of those two foresaid anabaptists, Mr Knowlis, and Kiffin the glover'. One of the committee had spoken 'very affectionately in those schismatics behalf'. During the examination of Kiffin 'another member of the committee did ... check the religious chairman, learned and much honoured Col Lee, for justly endeavouring strictly to examine the said delinquent' and another Independent was said to have defended him on the grounds that parliament had not intended 'to hinder gifted men from preaching'. (Knollys does not feature largely here, since, as the author knew, he was an ordained minister). A committee member is reported to have said of the Chicken man (probably Samuel Fulcher) '"here is gold in an earthen vessell" and the said chicken man confessed ... that he had 5s given him by some of the said committee for his brave boldness (it should seem) in thus affronting the authority of Parliament'.

These reports probably owe something to the imagination. The author was not a disinterested observer. He referred to Kiffin as 'a glover, a sly and sottish mechanical preaching anabaptist', and attacked the 'fiery salamanders of contention, Mr John Goodwin, together with his most seditious brother John Lilburne, Overton and divers others of that rotten rout'. But his report that Kiffin had protested against charges of lay preaching that he had 'a pretended ordination from a true reformed church (as he falsely called it) in a private house, by a company of sectaries', though phrased in a hostile manner, is perfectly credible. The Leigh Committee was undoubtedly intended to conduct its hearings with the gravity and decorum befitting a judicial arm of the authority of Parliament. But when the witnesses testified against Kiffin, 'divers of the audacious and unruly anabaptists and other sorts of sectaries (whereof there were very many then

⁸⁰ Jordan, *RRTE*, 93; CJ 5, 34-5 (31 December 1646); *ibid*, 109 (9 March 1647).

in the court, and so use to be, to affront and flout the Presbyterian citizens with unsufferable scoffs and jeers) fell to hissing and to loud laughing at the witness'. One of the committee is reported to have excused this audience participation by pretending it was applause.⁸¹ Despite all these complaints, however, Kiffin appears to have been found guilty; the committee had power to instruct offenders to desist on pain of imprisonment, and this probably explains why on 22 March 1647, the Westminster Assembly, at Kiffin's own request, nominated Lazarus Seaman and Cornelius Burgess to confer with him.

The Particular Baptists maintained a close friendship with Henry Jessey, who was reported to have attended with Hanserd Knollys, probably late in 1646, a meeting 'for the restoring of an old blind woman to her sight, by anointing her with oyle in the name of the Lord'.⁸² Jessey's record made it hard for Presbyterians to attack him and was probably important in winning the cooperation of those who remembered with affection the days of the anti-episcopal common front, before the atmosphere was soured by factional resentment. Probably in summer 1647, an elder of the First Classis, perhaps Dr John Clarke (d1653), was persuaded to grant the use of a room (presumably one which could hold many people) at London House, to one Tomlins⁸³ 'for the accommodation of Mr Jessey, Mr Kiffin, and others, whom I conceive to be truly godly, (but dissenting in the point of baptizing infants, and I suppose in the manner of church government, and it may be in some others)'. The author thought it allowable to 'let an house for money unto such persons or societies whose judgement and practice are in the main answerable to the fundamentals of Christian faith and practice'. This enraged hotter spirits in the classis; in a stormy debate, the author's 'greatly honoured Christian friends' charged that he had acted 'in compliance with them for the propagation of error', error which had 'occasioned them to leave our assemblies'. Such a view, he retorted, 'falls as foul upon our godly Independent Brethren (agreed by themselves to be tolerated) or any other dissenters, as it doth upon these, and denies all toleration whatsoever'. He reminded the rigid Presbyterians of earlier days: 'As for Episcopacy and stinted liturgy ... these and others, upon whom your assertion falls alike foul, cast off and dammed them; and even to persecution, asserted the contrary truth, before ever any of our Assemblies durst appear in it. You know these and those helped well to break the ice in England for us, and were of the forwardest ... it's not very strange that such should a little over-do.'⁸⁴

⁸¹ *Hinc Illae Lachrymae* (E421/6), 9, 2-4, 10

⁸² *M-S Minutes*, 341; *Gang* III, 19

⁸³ Lamb and one Tomlins were reported in Essex: *Gang* II, 92-3; the room-booker may be identifiable with Edward Tomlins a Particular Baptist of Wexford in 1653 (*ARPB*, 120) and he with the man identified as a Baptist enemy of the Levellers in 1649 (*LT*, 228)

⁸⁴ *Reasons humbly offered* (Wing R545, dates 1642), 4-5; the date is probably not long after the election of elders of the first classis, 30 April 1647; for Clarke, *DNB*, *Munck's Roll*; one ministerial delegate, William

The desire of Kiffin, and other Particular Baptist London leaders to show their commitment to civil magistracy, led them to avoid all taint of Anabaptistical turbulence or doctrinal instability. Yet it was simply not possible to seal off their congregations from the ferment of discussion, now endemic in the London sectarian congregations and amongst those growing numbers with no settled ecclesial loyalties. There are occasional glimpses of the difficulties arising: in 1646, 'at Kiffin's the anabaptist church, when their exercises were finished, a paper was given in to this effect, which was read to know a reason why they met every first day of the week, according to the custom of nations' and why at set times of the day. Scepticism as to the provenance of scriptures was also voiced. It seems that either Kiffin or Jessey's church was forced to admit 'how far they miscarried in admitting a dispute with a notable corrupt disturber, who thrust in amongst them' who tried to 'prove by Arguments the divinity of the scriptures, which he would not grant, but most sinfully denied it'.⁸⁵

Social and historical ties bound the Particular Baptist leaders to the Independents. As Murray Tolmie has noted, Walwyn's role-call of activists in spring 1647, 'Mr Stasmore, Mr Highland, Mr Davis, Mr Cooper, Mr Thomas Lamb of the Spittle, and very many more, for many weeks continually plied the House' is notable in its omission not only of Independents but also of Particular Baptists.⁸⁶ In summer 1647, Particular Baptists were involved trying to arrange a negotiated settlement with Charles. On 3 June, the King was secured by Cornet George Joyce at Holdenby, and proceeded via Childerley near Huntingdon to Newmarket; Cromwell knew about the first stage of this enterprise. Whilst it was unfolding, John Lilburne was a prisoner in the Tower of London, alongside Sir Lewis Dyve, who was visited there by Paul Hobson.⁸⁷ Hobson was Major of Lilburne's brother's regiment and perhaps Lilburne introduced him to Dyve. On 24 May Dyve reported that 'persons of very considerable power in the army' had asked him to find 'a person of trust' to convey 'some propositions' to the King, but the idea had been abandoned as politically impossible because of the radicalisation of the army. And indeed, such a plan, if resurrected in early June, must have been very different from the Solemn Engagement drafted by Ireton under pressure from the soldiers at Newmarket and agreed on 5 June; it may perhaps have

Gouge, was of a conciliatory spirit; but the second, Lazarus Seaman, was hot for conformity: Tai Liu. 'The Founding of the London Provincial Assembly 1645-47', *Guildhall Studies in London History* [1978] 109-134; Surman, 'Transcript of the minutes of the London Provincial Assembly'; 2 vols (D.W.L.), I, 3; II, 207.

⁸⁵ *Gang* I, 103; *Reasons humbly offered*, 4

⁸⁶ Haller, *LT*, [WJD 5] 355-6; Tolmie, 153; Cooper was possibly the man who later testified with Samuel Highland about the purge of the Southwark militia committee (*CPI*, 153-4)

⁸⁷ Firth, *CP* I, xxviii-xxi; Tolmie, 164-5

resembled his Heads of Proposals of mid-July.⁸⁸ Dyve dispatched Hobson to the King, with a letter dated 7 June, recommending him as a man to be trusted and urging ‘a full hearing as to what he will say’.⁸⁹ Joyce recalled that ‘After the King was in the Armies Quarters, some proud hearted men were ambitious to be acquainted with him, and did oft press me to bring him to them’, succeeding at last by their importunity. ‘Huntingdon, Hobson, Tuledah, and others spake with the King, and immediately were lifted up, and nothing would serve them but a personal treaty with the King’. This refers to a time not later than July, when Major Robert Huntingdon resigned. Joyce continued: ‘but these men before mentioned, together with some others; they disputed the lawfulness thereof, and brought scripture; and at last resolved upon it. And immediately upon their resolution, some progress was made in the petition at London, and other places by them and others.’⁹⁰ This is likely to refer to late September.

On 23rd September, Parliamentary Independents under the leadership of Cromwell helped vote down a vote of no further addresses put by Henry Marten. The following day it was reported that ‘Some congregations about London joined about a petition to be presented to the Parliament for a personall treaty with the king; but it came not so forward as to either of the two Houses’.⁹¹ It seems that about this time, Kiffin met the King, and that Lilburne was the unlikely instrument of this initiative. Dyve referred to ‘Mr William Kiffin, an anabaptist teacher in London, lately received from you when you were graciously pleased to speak with him’. Particular Baptist leaders, including Samuel Richardson, are identifiable with the ‘conscientious but weak’ people who, soon after, attended with a petition for a personal treaty ‘which they already had ready at the House door.’⁹² Thomas Prince linked Kiffin and Patience with John Price of John Goodwin’s congregation, charging that ‘you and your faction countenanced the breach of engagement with all sorts of people; abusing honest men, as now ye do: courting the king above measure; one sit and said “that the king was as consecrated corn, and ought not to be cut down by any but God only”: Mr Kiffin kissed the king’s hand, and after that he used his endeavour in persuading

⁸⁸ Tibbutt ‘Dyve’, 56. Perhaps Hobson visited the Tower with a letter from Robert to John Lilburne; but why did Dyve send him to the King on 7 June? Hobson does not appear in Woolrych’s narrative until October. He notes Dyve’s May report of soundings from senior army figures (*Soldiers*, 207, 70–1).

⁸⁹ Tibbutt ‘Dyve’, 58–9; Gardiner *HGCW*, III, 284–5; Charles moved on 8th from Childerley to Newmarket. The army was camped nearby and Cromwell had arrived from London on the 4th, so Newmarket was the logical place for Hobson to look for the king. Conceivably he was under Cromwell’s instruction.

⁹⁰ Joyce, *A Letter or Epistle*, E637/3, 3; Joyce argued against this plan: ‘a means to divide the godly people, and break them in pieces’ who had so far been ‘very unanimous’ (*ibid*); *Sundry Reasons inducing Major Robert Huntingdon*, E458/3 (2 Aug 1647).

⁹¹ *Perfect Occurrences*, E518/39, 24 September, 266

⁹² Tibbutt ‘Dyve’, 92; *Englands New Chaines 2nd pt LT*, 177; Lilburne identifies them as Particular Baptists, naming Samuel Richardson ‘a preacher amongst those... the first promoters’ of the personal treaty, *LT* 209; Walwyn too recalls their involvement (*Works*, 374).

people for a personal treaty; and to that purpose was Mr Kiffin, Mr Patience, Mr Price, and others of that faction with a petition at the parliament door.’

Particular Baptist involvement in this treaty is attested by a variety of witnesses, and it had clear advantages for them: ‘A settlement arrived at by Army and King on the basis of toleration was admirably suited to remove from the Baptists the taint of being rebels, and as such was especially attractive to men like Kiffin’. On 5 October, Lewis Dyve told Charles that Lilburne recommended he should meet three of the more extreme but influential agitators, Captain John Reynolds, Captain Francis White, and Edward Sexby, who should be approached through Paul Hobson. Lilburne thought it possible that within a few weeks the whole army could be won to a personal treaty. Dyve’s report might have been exaggerated, but it gives the strong impression that Lilburne was anxious for such a treaty. He was resentful at his continued imprisonment, and personal animus may have deepened his suspicion that Cromwell was considering a deal with the Scots. His acceptance of the assurances given by Charles to Kiffin suggests he had by now become more distrustful of the grandees than of the King himself. Whatever the explanation, two years later, Lilburne affected disapproval of these efforts to secure a personal treaty and showed no embarrassment in aspersing those who ‘style themselves the Preachers to the seven churches of anabaptists’ as ‘the first promoters in England (as Cromwell’s beagles to do his pleasure) of the first petition for a personal treaty almost 2 years ago.’⁹³

The King’s escape from Hampton Court on 11 November removed all remaining hope of such an outcome. But days later the London leaders brought out a printed *Declaration*, in which they sought more decisively than before to distance themselves from other elements in the movement. This work, published on behalf of congregational and baptist churches, appeared in two versions, one of which omitted ‘anabaptist’ churches from its title.⁹⁴ Now four years later, there was issued a response to attempts – apparently mischievous – to propose a new representative elected by gathered churches. Its eighteen signatories refer specifically to the second version of the 1647 *Declaration*, giving the year and distributor (Henry Overton), which had been ‘agreed to by our joint consent and published then in our names’.⁹⁵ On these apparently

⁹³ T.Prince, *The Silken Independents* (1649) E560/24, 4; Tibbutt ‘Dyve’, 91-2; Woolrych SS, 207, LT 209: *Juglers discovered* ... Lilburne, E409/22.

⁹⁴ *A Declaration by congregationall societies in and around the city of London, as well as of those commonly called anabaptists, as others* E416/20 Td 22 Nov. Simmons for Henry Overton; cf *A Declaration by several congregational societies in and about the city of London* (1647). The texts seem to be identical.

⁹⁵ *A Declaration of Divers Elders and Brethren*, E644(7), 1; names are subscribed (ibid, 8) 10 November 1651; Thomas Brooks, William Consett, Christopher Feake, John Foche, William Greenhill, T. Harrison, Thomas Hutton, Henry Jessey, William Kiffin, Hanserd Knollys, Emanuel Middleton, Samuel Nash, Thomas Sherman, Richard Shute, John Simpson, Robert Turpin, Thomas Whalley, Richard Woolaston. Of the

solid grounds, it has been widely assumed that the names appended to the 1651 work, though omitted from the earlier pamphlet, were personally responsible for it.⁹⁶ 'In the year 1647, we being accused by many, as if we were patrons of liberty to sin, and as if we denied magistracy and propriety on ones estate; and as if we owned polygamy: we were forced to vindicate ourselves in our Declaration then agreed by our joint consent, and published then in our names, concerning those four particulars charged upon us.' Now the phrase 'published then in our names' clearly cannot be taken to refer literally to individual signatories of an anonymous pamphlet. The 1651 signatories were saying that the 1647 pamphlet had been issued collectively on behalf of 'the members of our churches', the same churches to which they now belonged. (It is inherently improbable that the leadership of all these churches did not change for four years).

The identities of the Particular Baptists⁹⁷ of 1651 (Kiffin, Knollys, Consett, probably T. Harrison and Wollaston) tend to support this.⁹⁸ Of these five only Kiffin and Knollys remained of the seventeen signatories of the January 1646 Confession. That the other three, not leaders in January 1646, suddenly were in 1647 looks highly suspicious. Furthermore, although a Mr Wollastone is complained of by the Levellers, neither he nor T. Harrison is listed as amongst the Particular Baptist preachers alleged to have undermined them in 1649; only Consett is, with Spilsbury, Patience, Drapes, Richardson, Wayd, Tomlins and Fountain. So this 1649 list shares only Consett with the putative signatories of the recent 1647 *Declaration*, yet it shows fair continuity with the subscribers of the earlier 1646 confession.⁹⁹ It therefore most likely that Consett, Harrison and Wollaston had not been leaders in 1647, and that the *Declaration* was issued on behalf of the seven churches collectively.¹⁰⁰ Now the credibility of the 1647 pamphlet

Independents, Feake and Greenhill are well known. Brooks was independent minister at St Margaret New Fish St from 1648, Tai Liu *PL*, 111-13, 158-9, Nuttall, *VS* 91, 115, 120; for Shute, Tolmie *TS*, 140, 171

⁹⁶ Notably in *Tolmie*, 170-1 and B. White, 'Henry Jessey in the Great Rebellion', 145.

⁹⁷ *Tolmie*, 171; the practice here as elsewhere, of referring to Jessey as a 'Particular Baptist' is highly misleading. The Particular Baptists were linked in a communion closed to all but believers' baptists. Jessey, Simpson, and two or three other such persons which may figure on the list, were members of Calvinistic churches open to Baptists and Independents. They were friendly with the Particular Baptist leaders and shared with them ideas about theology, but sought to build their own group of churches on their own terms.

⁹⁸ Consett was probably the man of Cornhill, a freeman Skinner (DALE, 42) in 1641, freed on 20 Feb 1638, (Skinners Co Apprenticeships and Freedoms, Guildhall MS 30719, p253). Consett and 'T. Harrison' signed letters from the London Glasshouse church to South Wales c1650 (B. G. Owen, *The Ilston Book* (Aberystwyth 1996), 43-60); no-one else is known as a Particular Baptist, though Foche, Middleton and Nash are named as such by Underhill (*Confessions of Faith*, 273-87) in his republication. Emanuel Middleton must be distinguished from Edward Middleton, one of the London messengers who wrote to the church of Canterbury in 1653 (see P. J. Anderson, 'A Fifth Monarchist Appeal', *BQ* 33 (1989) 72-80).

⁹⁹ Overton in *LT*, 213, 228-9; 1646 signatories in *Tolmie*, 58. Some 1649 leaders eg Patience, and perhaps Drapes, Tomlins, Wade, might have been in Ireland by 1651 (Nickolls, *OL* 6; *ARPB*, 116, 119, 120).

¹⁰⁰ Richard Wollaston is reported to have been a member with Knollys (*Tolmie*, 150, 171) and to have signed petitions with him against tithes in 1647 and 1652 (TBHS 4 [1915], 'Jottings by John Lewis of Margate' {abstracted from Bodl Rawl C490}). Brooke aspersed a 'Mr Wollastone' on behalf of Walwyn (*LT*

in the eyes of those it was intended to influence must have depended upon their having been assured that, although anonymous, it did in fact represent the churches claimed; this will have involved disclosure of which churches (Baptist and congregational) were involved. It therefore seems quite implausible that the Levellers did not soon become aware not only of the initiative but also of its chief movers. We know they attended Baptist meetings and it is inconceivable that their contacts in these congregations should not have known that the *Declaration* had been issued in their names. Leveller 'surprise' at the Particular Baptists denunciations of 1649, was probably 'political'. Whereas the Baptist leaders had earlier sought to mask from the wider public their individual responsibility for the earlier attack, they had now come out into the open. The Levellers sought, on behalf of the wider public, to make the most of this unmasking.¹⁰¹

Clearly, the main Particular Baptist leaders were indeed involved in *A Declaration by Congregationall societies*. The very fact that the work was issued with two title pages suggests a quite disproportionate degree of political caution. For this can only have reflected the fear that some Independent congregations would reject the statement because of the association with Anabaptists in the title. The *Declaration* itself attacked 'the erroneous opinions and irregular practices of some particular persons making profession of the same way, and passing under the same denomination with the servants of god themselves'; these have done 'things inconvenient and unworthy the name of Christians', resulting in 'the offence of the world, before whom they have laid the stumbling block of their iniquity'.¹⁰² The authors denied intending to undermine magistracy, or 'to throw down those hedges that are set about men's estates, and to lay both one and the other common', protesting instead their attachment to 'liberty of men's persons, and propriety of their estates'. 'And as we do not disapprove of any form of civil government which hath a direct tendency and subordination to its proper end; so we do freely acknowledge, that a kingly government, bounded by just and wholesome laws, is both allowed by God and a good accommodation unto men.' The forms of civil government might include monarchy, but appear to exclude democracy, for 'it cannot but be prejudicial to human society, and the promotion of the good of Commonwealths, cities, armies, or families, to admit of a parity, or all to be equal in power.' Otherwise 'what can be expected but disorders, confusions, jealousies, factions, yea Civil wars themselves?'; an orderly polity depended on and must defend the 'ranging of men into

343); 'Woolaston' arbitrated in the schism in Simpson's congregation in 1656, (Capp, *FMM*, 277). In June 1671, 'Richard Woolaston' signed a letter from Henry Jessey's former church to Broadmead church Bristol (Underhill, *Broadmead Records*, 138-40); a Major Richard Wollaston bought sequestered property in Derbys in 1653-5 (CCC, 1849) and a 'master gunner' of those names occurs in *CSPD* in the mid-fifties. Lilburne's gaoler Wollaston (*LT* 401, 411) was named Henry (CCAM, 341).

¹⁰¹ Cf. Tolmie, 171

¹⁰² *A Declaration by congregationall societies* ... (1647, E416/20), 3-4.

several and subordinate ranks and degrees'. To argue for 'a community amongst men in the good things of this life' not only 'dissolves propriety' but is against scripture

The authors disowned anti-clerical attacks, which 'charge personal and particular errors and practices, such as savour of the flesh, and tend to obscure and darken the beauty of holiness, either upon the generality of the servants of God or upon the grounds and principles of their profession.' The implication is that these should not be permitted. It is suggested that men are not to be punished by the magistrate 'merely for what they conscientiously do in things relating to the worship of God.' But if this was to be applied to Socinians or Papists the fact was not spelt out. Their belief that actions 'inconsistent with moral principles' were matters for the magistracy placed all matters concerning the family and marriage within the civil sphere. A rebuttal of the slander that Baptists favoured polygamy concluded: 'we are no friends or favourers either of those unrighteous ways against which we have now declared more particularly, or of any *other thing, that is contrary to wholesome doctrine* [their emphasis]. For so far are we from patronizing or tolerating any thing of this nature, that our earnest desire is, that the magistrate into whose hand the sword of justice is put, may draw it out impartially against all those whether pretenders, or not pretenders to any strictness in religion, that do in word or deed disturb the civil peace of the land, in doing or speaking things destructive to the honour, safety or interests of man, in body name or goods'. At the minimum, this is ambiguous: by defining 'civil peace of the land' in such broad terms and in the context of an attack on 'any other thing contrary to wholesome doctrine', the authors suggest that they favour the suppression of opponents whose doctrines in areas of ethics and politics might outrage the 'honour' of conservative magistrates. Justices of the peace could find support from such formulations for the view that prosecution for refusing hat-honour, or payment of tithes was both permissible and essential. Was anti-clerical agitation a spiritual or civil matter? The fact that it was certainly 'contrary to wholesome doctrine' must suggest that such attacks could properly be suppressed.

These were not abstract principles. They were aimed at radicals and were understood as such. Soon, recalled Prince, the London Particular Baptist leaders changed tack: 'But when the chief of your faction, seeing to what detriment they had brought themselves, by their abusing us, and other good people... how did they weep, and lament, and call upon God! And O the promises they then made! They never would abuse honest men more! And if God would be but pleased to bless our joint endeavours really, what good men would they be; when as no sooner the storm begins to blow over, but honest men were destroyed and abused...' ¹⁰³

^{1 3} Ibid, 7, 8, 7 recte 9, 5, 12, 13; Prince, *The Silken Independents*, 5

7 The Lambe Congregation and Politics

The importance of Lambe's church in the mid 1640s, was recognised even by its enemies. Baillie referred to 'Mr Lambs Congregation, the greatest, as they say, and most fruitful of all their societies without comparison'. Bound up with this success was the church's tireless activism, which brought it into conflict with the forces of conservatism in ministry and magistracy. Thomas Lambe and his friends' commitment to active politics probably derived in part from their perception that both the return of the Bishops and the victory of the Presbyterians had to be resisted by all means. To prefer an independent victory might originate thus instrumentally, as a means to deliver toleration for the church. But there are signs that there was more to it than that.

There is reason to associate the Lambe church with another thorn in the side of authority, Nicholas Tew or Tue, the son of a London gentleman, bound apprentice to the stationer Henry Bird in September 1629, and freed in October 1638.¹⁰⁴ Tew was described in March 1643 as 'Nicholas Tew the Girdler at the exchange, who teacheth at Whitechapel at a chamber every sabboth day'. His future associations with Lambe suggest that this may have referred to Lambe's church before its move to Bell Alley.¹⁰⁵ On 9 December 1644, as Thomason noted on its face, a single printed sheet attacking Essex and Manchester was 'scattered about ye streets in the night'. With rough eloquence, it accused the aristocratic leaders of a betrayal of the parliament and a fraud upon the troops, concluding: 'Neither of them work, but make work; when they should do, they undo, and indeed to undo is all the mark they aime at. Do ye think greatness without goodness can ever thrive in excellent actions? No, honour without honesty stinks; away with't: no more Lords and ye love me, they smell o' the Court'!!

An apprentice, George Jeffery, examined by the Lords, named 'Thomas Lamb, an oilman' as one of the distributors of this sheet.¹⁰⁶ On 17 December, the House was told that the Stationers had found in Tew's possession 'divers scandalous books and pamphlets, and a letter for printing; the letter thereof is very like the letter of the libel against the peers'. He was arrested and examined by three Lords, but refused to answer; the committee recommended his committal 'for his contempt, and that he may be forth-coming' with information on 'the authors, dispersers and printing of these books, and what he knows concerning the scandalous libel'. Accordingly, on 26 December, Tew was 'committed to the Fleet' and justices were appointed to examine him. On 17 January they certified that Tew 'confesses that a printing press was brought to his house in Coleman St and was used there by Robert [ie Richard] Overton who lodged there', and that two

¹⁰⁴ Baillie, *ATFI*, 94; D. MacKenzie, ed., *Stationers' Apprentices 1605-40* (1961), 43 (no 756); Plomer 'Secret Printing', *The Library* 3rd ser, v (1904). 384-94

¹⁰⁵ Dobson, *XIV articles of treason*, (1643) E94/19, Td 30 March, 3

¹⁰⁶ *Alas Pore Parliament* (1644), E21/9; LJ7, 91

works of Lilburne were printed there. Not till Monday 10 Feb, when Tew petitioned for release, was he bailed. Religious meetings enabled distribution of unlicensed material without the danger, faced by booksellers, of holding pamphlets in premises vulnerable to raids.

Thomas Lambe appears not to have written on directly political issues, and he did not venture into print for ten years after publishing *Christ Crucified* probably in the first half of 1646. In the preface of *Absolute Freedom from Sin* (1656), addressed to the Lord Protector, he recalled 'your own goodness, formerly appearing to me in my behalf upon several occasions'. Too much should not be made of this. Lilburne too had once been friends with Cromwell.¹⁰⁷ Possibly Lambe became anxious about increasingly unorthodox views developing in and around his congregation, the risks of the political radicalism with which they were coming to be associated. Certainly, daring in one regard was associated with daring in the other. The Baptist Crab of Southwark who was linked with the militant republican tract *The Last Warning* was also said to be a mortalist: that is, he thought the soul died with the body. Just such a combination had already been reported about four months earlier, when on 5 February there took place a debate on mortalism at the Spital. The chief protagonists were Lambe and Timothy Batte. The moderator for Batte was the brilliant pamphleteer Richard Overton, author of the famous 'Martin Marpriest' pamphlets.¹⁰⁸

Hearing that 'a great concourse of people' were to meet there, the Mayor sent 'two of the Marshall's men', who ordered that the dispute be halted. Lambe was unwilling to defy them: 'Lam answered the officers he would go up and acquaint the brethren, which he did, standing in a place like a Desk above the people at one end of the room, and Batte at the other.' Both Batte and Overton, however, were for continuing in defiance of the order. Batte is said to have called the Mayor 'a limb of antichrist' for trying to disperse the meeting, asking 'what power or authority he had to forbid them...and for his part he durst undertake to make it good to Master Mayor (calling my Lord Mayor in a most base and scornful manner Master Mayor)'. Overton 'stood up and said, Brother Lamb, had Paul done well if he had desisted from preaching in the name of Jesus if he had been commanded by the High priests to forbear, had he done well or not? Lam answered no; whereupon Overton replied in a most scornful proud manner, nor ought we to obey Master Mayor.' Edwards reports that the meeting stayed in session, debating for over four hours.¹⁰⁹

But it should not be inferred that Lambe was conservative in politics. He and his congregation played an important role in the famous large Leveller petition, *The Humble Petition of many Thousands*, and in the subsequent campaign of spring-summer 1647. It was immediately

¹⁰⁷ LJ 7, 97, 115, 142, 185; Plomer op cit, 377; HMC 6th Report, 46, LT, 5.

¹⁰⁸ Most famous is *The Arraignment of Mr Persecution* (1645) (Haller, *TOL*, III, 205-56), described by Prynne as 'that most infamous, seditious, railing libel' (*A Fresh Discovery* (1645), E267/3, 18).

¹⁰⁹ *Gang* III, 110, *Gang* II, 17-18.

provoked by the activities against lay preaching of the powerful Committee of Examinations, which 'did parallel all the former practices complained of in the Star Chamber and High Commission'. The petition had been framed, said Walwyn by 'the generality of congregations'. But, against the wishes of more cautious Independents, it included some very radical proposals, including the abolition of 'tithes and all other enforced maintenance', laws in English and denial to King and Lords of a negative voice in legislation.¹¹⁰ John Price, a leading figure in John Goodwin's congregation criticised this and subsequent petitions. He connected its militant content and tone to the social class of the framers and their friends: 'the phrase, style and dialect of these petitions must always be harsh and unpleasant, and in case if denied, menacing and provoking, representing the petitioners, forward, imperious, passionate, furious, positive and implacable, men of low and mean birth, breeding and quality'.

On 15 March 1647, the Commons had this petition read out, and also heard an account of its subscription, from a Mr Boys, which is of exceptional interest. Boys was probably the informant who had brought the document 'to the hands of Mr Glyn, recorder of London, and a member of the Commons house'.¹¹¹ Having 'heard that divers dangerous doctrines were delivered at the Spittle', Boys had attended, he said, out of curiosity. At the meeting-house, 'in one place there was a young man, who endeavoured to prove Free will. There was likewise another person who preached (one Mr Lambe), who had before him (after he had ended his sermon and his prayer) two or three sheets of paper; that another person, that sat over against him, read a petition; and that he [Lamb] corrected him in reading it in many places; and that divers people subscribed it: some six subscribed it in his presence: that there was some hundred or six score hands subscribed. That he had this printed copy of the petition from a woman that was reading it.' A notable feature of this account is the role of 'Mr' Lambe, who did not merely acquiesce in the reading of the document by someone else but who had it in front of him, and actively ensured (by correcting his colleague) that the audience heard it rightly. The reference to the woman also suggests that copies of the petition were distributed so that those individuals who could, might read it, but that a single large sheet of names was also circulated. The impression given by this hostile witness is of a well organised and businesslike procedure, in which Lambe tried to ensure that the substance of the political petition was heard, studied and understood; if he was at all anxious about its radicalism, it does not appear so in Boys' account.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ *LT*, 354; Wolfe, *LM*, 131-41, quoted at 140

¹¹¹ *LT*, 18-19, 307; Walwyn, *Works*, 277

¹¹² *CJS*, 112 (15 March 1647); petition said to have been 'subscribed by Mr Lamb, and some others of his adherents, about London...' *Perfect Occurrences* no 11, E381(7) 15 March 1647, 84

The Commons considered the petition a police rather than a political matter. It ordered that an investigation into the perpetrators be launched by the Committee of Examinations. Since the committee had been set up to enforce the ordinance on lay-preaching this choice illustrates that political and religious radicalism were viewed as indistinguishable. Only six days earlier, the committee had been given new powers to imprison recalcitrant offenders against the ordinance.¹¹³ On 19 March, according to a second petition [B] several hundred people assembled at the Court of Requests¹¹⁴, and Nicholas Tew proceeded to read to them a certificate [C] ‘to own and avouch the said petition’ ie [A] to be presented to the Leigh committee in session at the nearby Queen’s Court.¹¹⁵ According to Walwyn, the summoning of Lamb helped build support: ‘Mr Lamb, at whose meeting place it was taken, [was] ordered to appear there: this occasioned a very great appearance in the owning of it, by abundance of conscientious honest people, and that occasioned some discontent in the committee’. Lilburne confirms that ‘M. Lamb sent up for to a committee as a delinquent, and divers hundreds of his fellow petitioners came up with him, with a certificate to avow the petition’, which, as it averred was ‘no scandalous or seditious paper’ but was ‘subscribed and to be subscribed by none but constant cordial friends to the Parliament’.¹¹⁶ They were refused leave to present this certificate, which was printed nevertheless.

In May, it was claimed that persons unnamed had ‘obstructed the gathering of subscriptions’ to the original petition, and that at the Leigh Committee, two petitioners had been ‘most boisterously used by Sir Philip Stapleton and Col Hollis, who made offer as if they would draw their swords against the petitioners.’ The committee reported that since several preachers did ‘slight that committee ... the committee, to prevent greater inconveniences, did restrain one of them, one Mr Tew’, committing him to the custody of sergeant at Arms; Tew was singled out for having read the certificate publicly, and was arrested and imprisoned as ‘a man very active in the business’ of promoting the original petition. Lilburne said this was Tew’s third imprisonment.

¹¹³ CJ5, 109 (9 March 1647); Wolfe LM. 136-7

¹¹⁴ This met in the ‘little Hall, or the White Hall of the Palace of Westminster’ (N. Wilding and P. Laundy, *Encyclopaedia of Parliament*, (1971) 179). A conciliar court, it was not specifically abolished in 1641 but sittings discontinued the following year (Holdsworth, *History of English Law*, I, 53-7, 414-6); it appears from Walwyn’s account that it was used in 1647 as a lobbyists’ meeting place.

¹¹⁵ Walwyn’s *Gold Tried in the Fire* consists of a preface plus five documents, but in the B.L. copy the preface appears alone (E392/19). The documents appear together between E392/20 and E392/21. They are [A] the large petition (15 March) *To the Right honourable, and supreme authority... The Humble Petition of many Thousands*; [B] petition (20 March) *To the Right Honourable ... divers well affected citizens occasioned by the original petitioners’ treatment by the Leigh committee*; [C] *To the Honourable... the Humble Certificate read out by Tew 19 March, before attending the Leigh Committee*; [D] petition (cMay), *The Humble petition of divers well-affected people*, and [E] *The Humble Petition of many thousands of well affected*, (2 June). These are in Walwyn, *Works*, from which subsequent references will be cited.

¹¹⁶ Walwyn said the large petition was found at Lamb’s ‘house’ (*Works*, 286) and also at his ‘meeting place’, (*Works*, 390) suggesting Lamb was actually living at the Spital meeting place; Lilburne, *Rash Oathes Unwarrantable*, E393/39, 35-44, quoted at 35

The first has been earlier noticed. On a second occasion he had been ‘most illegally by the present Lord Mayor of London, fetched out of his shop and committed to Newgate, for having had in his custody one of the petitions promoted by the citizens of London: and now, thirdly most illegally committed’ by Hollis and the rest of the Leigh Committee.¹¹⁷ Kiffin found that the Presbyterians did not make much distinction between him and these radicals; soon after the imprisonment of Tew and Tulidah, he appeared before the divines of the Westminster Assembly, and there agreed to consult over his breach of the ordinance on lay-preaching.

The campaign continued until June. Walwyn recalled that the large petition had been a product of ‘the generality of congregations’, but leading Independents were unhappy with its radicalism, so the agitation was mainly carried on by the Separatists and General Baptists: he named Sabine Staesmore, Thomas Cooper, Samuel Highland and Thomas Lambe of the Spital as the chief activists in this period; they ‘continually plied the House’. The petitioners were repeatedly promised that the House would consider it, but nothing was done. On 23 April, a debate on the matter was scheduled to take place, ‘which occasioned many of the petitioners to be at the house, where they waited till five at night, but had no answer given them.’ On 30 April, the House received the famous delegation of troopers, Allen, Sexby and Sheppard, who for the first time articulated the army’s grievances in the capital. Eventually, on 4 May the Londoners had an answer: the Commons voted by 80 votes to 56 to convey its dislike of petition B. The petitioners then framed a new appeal, presented 20 May, when they were led by Samuel Highland, Sabine Staesmore, William Browne, Robert Hall and Benjamin Wood, none of whom was a prominent Independent. But when the commons resolved that day to convey their dislike of this petition [D] and to have it burned, the close vote, 94 to 86, reflected growing Independent unease. About this time, said Walwyn, ‘some of my now adversaries began to approve our motions, and they and I began to come a little nearer together, and had joint meetings and debates’ and as a result ‘we all, both my friends and his, joined in a petition, the last and most sharp of any’.¹¹⁸

Walwyn understood this sea change as arising from growing approval of the activists’ persistence in the face of stone-walling. So it may have been, in part; but certainly the Army’s sensational appearance on the London political scene, and the Presbyterian counterattack in the city, which led through Parliamentary legislation and Aldermanic action to the purge of the London militia in May, were powerful factors in forcing the Independent leadership back into active support. The ‘sharp’ petition mentioned by Walwyn [E] was considered more promptly by

¹¹⁷ Walwyn, *Works*, [Petition D], 289-90; *CJ* 5, 118; *Kingdoms Weekly Intelligencer*, 201(E381/9), March 19, 266; *Perfect Diurnal* 190, 15-22 March (E515/4), 1519, 1525; for Tulidah’s release, *ibid* no 191, 1533; J. Lilburne, *Rash Oathes Unwarrantable*, E393/39, 36.

¹¹⁸ *LT* [WJD 5], 356; *Rushworth* VI, 464, 475, 478; *CJ* 5, 179 (20 May).

the House, and the shifting balance of forces was also reflected in the resolution then put. Whereas the Presbyterians had earlier forced through the burning of petition D, the independents now posed the question 'whether an answer shall be given to this petition at this present', losing by only 128 to 112.¹¹⁹

It is clear from this campaign of almost three months that the Lamb congregation and their Separatist friends were acting with ecclesially uncommitted Levellers independently of the Independents; this was not a single petition on a single issue, in which they had some how tangentially become involved, but sustained activism on a broad front. It was probably the same association of Separatist and General Baptist petitioners which was active after the Army's invasion of London. On 24 September, 'Another petition from the same persons about London that petitioned before to have the House purged, have a petition with many hands ready but not yet presented; for all matters to be laid aside by the Parliament and the Houses to go about the settling of the Kingdom only.' It was reported on 4 October that a petition had been brought to Parliament 'by those commonly called the well affected citizens of London', indicating continuity through 'commonly' and recalling the spring petitions. It asked 'that the House will discharge all those from sitting who sat in the House in the absence of the old Speakers.' This renewed demand for a thorough purge had earlier been pressed by Lilburne and the agitators, with Cromwell's support (Fairfax opposed it).¹²⁰ Though decisive evidence is lacking it may appear from this that the Leveller core of the 'well affected citizens', whether Separatist, General Baptist or ecclesially uncommitted, were in August-September 1647 coordinating their efforts with the agitators.

Meanwhile, country areas were also experiencing some Baptist radicalism. The adventures of Samuel Oates in Essex had a political dimension not so far treated: in 1646 it was charged that 'he had preached against the Assessments of Parliament and the taxes laid on the people, teaching them that the saints were a free people, and should do what they did voluntarily, and not be compelled; but now contrary to this they had assessment upon assessment, and rate upon rate.' Oates had left Essex, and was active in Rutland. There, local ministers complained of his activities to the High Sheriff, Abel Barker, who proposed on 19 March 1647 to have him brought before Oakham assizes. Yet six months later, anxiety at his 'disorderly assemblies and dispensing of unsound doctrine unto the people' continued. On 6 October Oates was arrested at Stretton on the orders of the magistrate Robert Horseman, and sent to Barker with a view to putting him on trial; Horseman suggested that this be held in 'some secure place... lest there should be any disturbance to hinder proceedings.' But it seems nothing was done. There is a sense

¹¹⁹ *CJ5*, 195 2 June; *Tolmie*, 154

¹²⁰ *Perfect Occurrences*, E518/39, 24 Sept, 266; Wolfe *LM* 41; *Humble Address of the Agitators*, E402/8 (14 Aug); E410/10 *Moderate Intelligencer*, no 133, 4 Oct, 1305; Whitelock, *Memorials*, II, 218 (5 Oct)

from the documents that during 1647, Oates was becoming more active and effective in Rutland and surrounding areas, and that the local authorities failed to act with any resolution. Perhaps they worried about radicals amongst the army units quartered nearby. However that may be, in December 1647, an impressive nineteen ministers from Rutland and the bordering parts of Lincs and Northants petitioned Parliament against ‘divers erroneous and seducing spirits crept in amongst us’, and in particular ‘one Wike, Lambe, and especially one Samwell Oates’. Thomas Lambe here added another county to the long list of his missionary expeditions, and ‘one Wike’ was surely Andrew Wyke the Colchester Baptist who had been gaoled at Bury St Edmunds.

Lambe and Wyke may have made only guest appearances. But it is clear that Oates lived in Rutland for many months (Titus was born there), ‘going up from town to town preaching and rebaptizing very many and drawing a concourse of people after him, appointing his public meetings weekly in barns and stables’. He ‘hath prevailed with people to thrust out some good ministers put into livings by ye parliament, and to bring in others put out by sequestration.’ Making all allowance for hysteria and embroidery, it seems clear that Oates had a considerable following, and judging by the list of ministers, his influence extended both into south-west Lincolnshire and Northants. In that county, there was dry tinder even before his arrival: a minister of Northants complained on 24 September 1646, against soldiers who ‘scorned all our religious days and duties; call them fools that pay tithes, and them thieves that receive them’. The Rutland ministers, of course, were chiefly concerned with Oates’s religious activities, especially his success in attracting members of their congregations. But they recognised him also as a political threat; some of their language strongly suggests that soldiers were involved. Oates ‘slights and vilifies the authority of Parliament’; he ‘makes mutinies in ye Country, and give out most dangerous words by himself or his agents of ye cutting of their throats that are opposite to him in his opinions’. He ‘hath lately been a great dispenser and promoter of that seditious paper called ye Agreement of ye People, bringing or sending it to diverse places through the country’.¹²¹ One of the key demands of the *Agreement* was the abolition of tithes, also the central demand of a Rutland petition printed on 1 November 1647; this surely had to do with the agitational work of Samuel Oates and his followers. (In November 1648, a petition from the county against the personal treaty with the King was presented by Lieutenant Freeman, probably the Baptist John Freeman, accompanied by three gentlemen of Rutland).¹²²

¹²¹ *Gang* II, 147-8; Betteridge, ‘Early Baptists’, *BQ* 25 (1974), 206, 207, 209, for birth of Titus at Oakham, *ibid* 373; *LJ* 9, 572

¹²² *Gang* III 21, *Two Petitions to the Generals Excellency*, (1 Nov 1648), E 412/18; *To his Excellency the Lord Fairfax...* (24 November 1648, B.L 669.f.13 (47)); probably the John Freeman who signed the *Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations* (1651), signatories printed Betteridge *op cit*, 273-4

On 11 December 1647, the House of Lords ordered that Oates be arrested and brought before them, but on 31st, they found it necessary to issue a second order, admitting that he had escaped, and instructing the Sheriffs of Lincs, Ruts, Leics and Northants to return him to London, should they succeed in apprehending him. When Oates was rearrested in Rutland, the Lords ordered on 22 January 1648 that he should be bound in £200 plus two sureties of £100 to appear before the judges of Assize. He did not attend, but was acquitted, because his accusers proved unable to produce their witnesses. 'Whereupon the said Oates taking himself wholly acquitted and discharged with much more audacious boldness proceeds, to prosecute his wicked design then formerly he had done, by more frequent gathering of mutinous assemblies... uttering most seditious and treasonable speeches against monarchy itself.' So the Lords were informed in another outraged petition of May 1648; in it, the county ministers pleaded for 'the dissolving of the schismatical and mutinous meetings of his deluded followers'. But Oates continued on his way; he continued to be able to mobilize worrying numbers of people, to whom he preached in favour of the deposition of Charles I and the formation of a republic. In Rutland, at any rate, the radicals were by no means engulfed by the spring tide of royalist sentiment which (as we are advised) was then sweeping through the nation.¹²³

²³ Order cited from *LJ9*, 619, 673 and petition from HLRO 15 May 1648 in Bettendge, *op cit*, 209-11; the petition also appears in *LJ9*, 572.

6: The Army, the Levellers and the Revolution

1 Baptist army preachers

Baptists played an important role in the army, as chaplains, soldiers and officers. It has been suggested that after mid 1647, twenty-one Particular and seven General Baptists were in the service. The Particular Baptists given are William Allen, Daniel Axtell, Robert Barrow, Richard Beaumont, Alexander Brayfield, Richard Creed, Richard Deane, John Gardiner, William Gough, Benjamin Groome, Edward Harrison, Paul Hobson, Abraham Holmes, William Knowles, Richard Lawrence, William Packer, Robert Reade, Thomas Shephard, John Spencer, Nathaniel Strange and John Webb. Others 'who were Baptists or were soon to be so' included John Turner, John Gladman, Peter Wallis, William Disher, William Malyn, and Thomas Empson, and there were more tentative possibilities, Robert Locker or Lockier and John Okey.¹

There is no doubt in the cases of Beaumont, Hobson, Packer and Webb. Captain Paul Hobson was a signatory of the 1644 confession. He was described both by Edwards (who says he was a Bucks man), and by Luke, as a tailor. He may have been the lieutenant Hobson of Charles Duckett's company in John Hampden's regiment in May 1643 and then Captain in Rainborough's regiment in Manchester's army. He was with John Boggis in Yarmouth, in spring 1645.² There were many Webbs, roaming through the inhospitable pages of *Gangraena*, but Edwards positively identifies as the Baptist signatory, Lieutenant John Webb, who appeared at Aston Roleants, Berks in 1646. Taking possession of the pulpit, Webb was 'very confident that shortly he should see Presbytery laid as low as Prelacy'.³ Captain Richard Beaumont preached with Hobson in Beds and Northants in June 1645, to the indignation of Luke, and was said to have baptized a horse at Yakesley, Northants in June 1644.⁴ Firth was reluctant to identify him definitely with the Captain in Fairfax's regiment of horse, because of his omission from Sprigge's account. But he noted that the regiment 'seems to have been charged with the siege of Wallingford' in June 1646. It seems very likely that he was the man associated with its officers in the intervention there, and at other churches in the area, in the autumn.⁵ Packer was cashiered by Crawford as 'a notorious anabaptist' in Spring 1644 and was defended by Cromwell; despite the tendency of Presbyterians to use 'Anabaptist' as a synonym for all except Roman Catholics who

¹ Tolmie *TS*, 155-9 quoted at 157

² *Gang* III, 251-2, *Gang* I, 90; Ellis *OL*, 262-3; Davies, *EHCG* 39; *Gang* II, 161; see W.T. Whitley, 'The Rev Col Paul Hobson', *BQ* 9 (1940), 307-10; Greaves, *Saints and Rebels*, 133-56

³ *Gang* III 15-16; a church at Kingston Blount, about 2 miles distant, existed by 27 May 1656, *ARPB*, 159; perhaps Webb and friends had founded it.

⁴ H.Ellis, *Original Letters* ... (3rd ser, vol 4 1846), 254, 260, 262-6; Tibbutt, 'Letterbook', 735, 739, 740, 751, 755, 1411, 1612; C.Holmes, *The Eastern Association in the Civil War*, 199, 201.

⁵ *F-D* 317, 319, 132; *Gang* III, 253

disagreed with them, his later record may justify taking this literally; Packer was a trustee for the purchase of Theobalds, where many Baptists later gathered, for the huge sum of £35,873.11.3d on 12 August 1650.⁶ These four may be regarded as certainly Baptists in 1647, as can John Spencer, distributor of Leonard Busher's pamphlet and possible surrogate for the Baptist George Kendall.

For most of the rest, evidence is inconclusive at best.⁷ Richard Lawrence can almost definitely be excluded. In 1651 he was governor of Waterford, home to the strongest Baptist group in Ireland, led by Thomas Patient, which pioneered strict closed membership principles in the country. Yet he does not appear as one of the twelve signatories on the Waterford letter to Dublin the following January, or amongst the twelve Waterford members reported in June 1653, or as a member anywhere else in Ireland, in the correspondence of that month.⁸ Almost as certain is the case of Robert Barrow, whose conversion can be dated to about 1654 (see Appendix B).

Several might be designated 'probables'. More likely than not is Captain Richard Deane, cousin of the admiral of the same name, who in a letter written many years later recalled various Baptists with whom he had been fraternally acquainted about 1649; of these the earliest given was Mr Benjamin Cox at Bedford'; Coxe apparently arrived there in 1648.⁹ A Lieutenant Brayfield (almost certainly Alexander), was reported to have 'gloried in' Richard Beaumont's baptism of a horse in 1644, and was probably a Baptist at the time.¹⁰ Daniel Axtell was characterised in 1649 by Overton as 'my back friend' and a 'retainer' of Kiffin's church, but we do not know when he became a Baptist. In October 1646 he alternated with his commander Colonel Hewson in the pulpit of Wallingford church; he was a Particular Baptist in Kilkenny in 1653.¹¹ Hewson was probably an independent, but the following week he turned out the vicar of Aston Roleants, near Oxford, whilst in the company of the Baptist John Webb.¹² Thomas Empson might just be labelled a 'probable'. He was an agitator in Fairfax's regiment of horse in October 1647 and attended the Whitehall debates. The evidence about his religion is from the invasion of Scotland in 1650/1, when it was reported from Dundee that he was one of 'a very precious people who seek the face of God.' Cromwell famously replied to Hacker's view that he was 'a better preacher than a fighter... Truly I think that he that prays and preaches best will fight best... I dare

⁶ Letter no 20 in Carlyle wrongly gives his name as 'Lt Col Warner'; *F-D* 35-6; Gentles DMMP, 319

⁷ It has not been possible to search the Worcester College MSS, a major omission.

⁸ J Rogers, *Ohel*, (1653), 301-6; *ARPB*, 118-20; Lawrence produced two anticlerical pamphlets, *The Anti-Christian Presbyter* and *The Wolf Stripped* in 1647, but neither reveals anti-paedobaptist views

⁹ Ivimey I, 293-5; Deane was a PB at least from 1657-8 *ARPB*, 96-7, 108, 175, 186, 214; Coxe and Bedford, *M-S Minutes*, 520, 526, 533, C. Surman, ed., *Minutes of the Fourth Classis in the Province of London*, Harleian Soc 82/83 (1952/3), 56, 58, 140, and see below.

¹⁰ *Gang* III, 15-16; *F-D* 408; Gentles, *NMA* 299; Zaller, *G-Z1*, 90

¹¹ *Gang* III, 253; Gentles, *NMA*, 102; *ARPB* II 120; Haller, *LT* [PCS 41, 29] 228, 218.

¹² Hewson: Wharton, *SNLP* 23; he was an ex-presbyterian now independent: Rogers, *Ohel*, 395-6.

assure you he is a good man and a good officer'. He was listed as of Enfield 'esq', when leased 21 acres in Theobalds by Packer and Gladman on 22 April 1652.¹³

The rest must be regarded as uncertain. Nathaniel Strange was certainly a Particular Baptist in 1656; there are problems pinning down his military career.¹⁴ John Gardiner contributed the third preface, dated 7 September 1653, to Jane Turner's *Choice Experiences of the Kind Dealings...* (1654); his designation as a Baptist in 1647 may rest upon the statement that he had 'had for some years more than ordinary experience of her clear conceptions, and sound judgement'; this may be regarded as inconclusive in respect of his own congregational affiliations six years earlier. Gardiner might have been favoured by John Rede; he had been an ensign under Captain Deane and arrived with Benjamin Groome from Fenwick's regiment to Monck's in summer 1650.¹⁵ For the religious views of Groome,¹⁶ as for William Knowles and Robert Reade, nothing has been found before the reference in the Clarke papers to a paper signed by twelve members of 'the rebaptised Churches in St Johnston's, Leith and Edinburgh' cited by Firth, which disclaimed complicity in the 'Overton plot' and which Monck reported on 24 January 1655. Gough, Reade, Hobson and John Turner were involved in the purchase of property at Holme Cultram, Cumberland in 1651.¹⁷ Abraham Holmes signed the third edition of the Particular Baptist confession published from Leith in March 1653, when he was clearly respected; he had probably been a member for some time, but the date of his joining is unknown.¹⁸ Holmes, Gough, Gardiner and Groome were officers in Monck's regiment of foot (later the Coldstream Guards), stationed in Scotland. In February 1652, Monck took some leave; he returned to Scotland, to encounter 'the most dissident of his own regiment of foot (which during his absence in the Dutch

¹³ Firth *SC*, 31; Carlyle Letter 162; Cromwell reported his gallantry at Musselburgh on 30 July 1650 Carlyle letter no 135; *F-D*, 67, 162, 164; Empson was instrumental in the cashiering of Captain Covell in 1650 for supposedly blasphemous views, *F-D* 69-70; Gentles *DMMP*, 278

¹⁴ For Strange, Davies *EHCG* 125 who gives him as ensign c1650, an anomaly if he was also the lieutenant in *A Remonstrance sent from Col Lilburne's regt* (1647) E417/15, 5-6; *ARPB* 78-80; *F-D* 190 identifies the cornet Strange of the Whitehall debates (CP 2, 263) as Joseph Strange of Harrison's regiment and Taft, 'Voting List', 154 concurs; see also Greaves, *DUE* 97, 164.

¹⁵ The Dorset committee complained 29 March 1651 that John Rede 'with a heavy hand did endeavour to impose one Gardiner, a soldier and dipper, to be pastor and lecturer of Poole', Bayley, *Dorset*, 343; a John Gardiner was a captain in Monck's regiment c1650 (Davies, *EHCG* 42, Laurence, *PAC*, 128, *F-D* 535)

¹⁶ A Benjamin Groome ensign in Lord Robartes' regiment in 1642: Peacock, *Army Lists* 38; captain in Monck regiment 1651, 1652-4, 1655, 1659, Davies *EHCG*, 126-7

¹⁷ C. Firth, *Scotland and the Protectorate*, 242 and n; names are Geo Walton, Wm Knowles, Robert Reade, Rd Burrell, Robt Carter, Benjamin Groome, Humphrey Hughes, Henry Watson, Jn Pearson, Geo Parker, Benjamin Hewling, John Smith, Thomas Paull, Robert Stent, William Downes; Gentles, **DMMP*, 347

¹⁸ Holmes signed the letter of the agitators into Wales and is listed as Captain agitator of Lilburne's regiment *CP I*, 436, 161; *F-D* 456, 459, 535, 539

War had been so transformed that most of the officers were become Anabaptists)'. This too suggests that some of these men converted in the early 50s.¹⁹

Robert Mason, the soldier agitator of Hardress Waller's regiment is probably identifiable both with the man of those names who was a member with Hanserd Knollys in 1654, and with the 'Captain Mason' who visited the Newcastle church in August 1653; possibly he was a Baptist several years earlier.²⁰ The evidence for Richard Creed may relate to his attendance at the Midlands Association of Particular Baptists in September 1657, and perhaps his later military activities.²¹ It is highly probable that the Thomas Sheppard of Samuel Eaton's church from 1633 is to be identified with the leather dresser of St Olave Bermondsey, brought before High Commission in October 1635, baptized by Blunt in January 1642 and with the signatory of the 1644 Confession. But nothing has been found to connect this bearer of what was a very common name to the agitator of Ireton's regiment of 'Shropshire', who 'served first under Essex in the Earl of Bedford's Cuirasseers' and was taken prisoner at Oxington in September 1643. A Thomas Sheppard was also associated with Cirencester Baptists in 1649.²² In the case of William Allen, 1651 seems the most likely date. The fact that the independent, Col John Jones, wrote to Allen in September 1651 urging him to resume the preaching he had once undertaken suggests that Allen may not yet have been a Baptist. Allen and Vernon married Elizabeth Huish and her sister Jane, who arrived in Ireland in that year. By 14 January 1652, they were members of the Baptist congregation at Waterford led by Thomas Patient.²³ Hardacre thought 'Allen's outlook from about 1651 was dominated by the principles of the group which he now embraced'.²⁴

Of those given as 'soon to become' Baptists, John Turner might just have joined. His wife Jane's book about their spiritual odyssey, suggests that the couple were baptised in London about 1646/7 and that they married the same week, evidently some time before Turner's regiment departed for garrison duty in Newcastle in 1648 (they were probably instrumental in founding the church there). This was the regiment of which Paul Hobson was the effective commander; in it

¹⁹ Quoted from Edward Phillips's Chronicle in Davies, *EHCG* 91.

²⁰ *CP* I, 88, 161, 436; *A Declaration of Several churches* (1654) E 809/15, reprinted in *TBFIS* 3 129-49; *Fenstanton Records*, 293-4 identifies Mason with Lt Col John Mason, ex of Newcastle. His rank, and the fact that the Knollys church had connections with the north-east suggest this was Robert not John.

²¹ *ARPB* I, 33; Gentles, *DMMP*, 271; Gentles reports association in land with Richard Sankey, perhaps a relation of Col Jerome Sankey, baptised 13 September 1652 (J Mayer, ed., *Inedited Letters*, 42); Hughes *Warks* 187, 206; *F-D* passim; not (presumably) the clerk to the CPGW, Richards *RDW* 236, 248, 259.

²² *Burridge* 2, 302-3, 305; Whitley, *TBHS* I, 226-30, at 230n1; for the agitator, *CP* I 430-1, *F-D* 118; Gentles, *NMA* 160; T[homas] T[hache], *The Gainsayer Convinced*, 8; *ARPB*, 36;

²³ Rogers, *Ohel*, (1653), 301-6; *ARPB* II, 118-20; T. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland*, (1975), 101.

²⁴ P. Hardacre, 'William Allen: Cromwellian Agitator...', *BQ* 19 (1962), 292-308; J. Mayer, ed., *Inedited Letters*, 6; *CP* I, passim; *F-D*, passim; T. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland*, 105, 108, 111, 288, B. Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, 60, 99-100; Seymour, *PI*, 23, 61, 78, 125; *Thurloe SP*, passim.

were to be found ensign John Turner, Lt John Bramston and ensign Nathaniel Strange.²⁵ Gladman and Malwyn (not to be confused with Cromwell's secretary) were named as Anabaptists in February 1658; but Gladman was associated with the Baptist William Packer much earlier, in March 1652, in purchase of the estate at Theobalds.²⁶ Peter Wallis and William Disher, like Gladman and Empson, were members of Fairfax's regiment of horse in 1647; Wallis was at Putney and both attended the Whitehall debates. Disher 'of Ipswich, Suffolk, squire', is possible. In April 1652 he also became a holder of land at the Theobalds estate.²⁷ But Wallis is highly unlikely. He was named in 1660 as one of the dangerous Baptists in Ireland. But, although he was in the country in summer 1652 when Major in command of Henry Cromwell's regiment, there is no reference to him in the Irish correspondence of the Particular Baptists the following year.²⁸

The evidence in relation to the General Baptists is equally uneven. Obviously Henry Denne was already a Baptist by the time he joined Scrope's regiment as a chaplain in 1647.²⁹ Captain John Garland was also definitely a Baptist by this time. In 1644, he and James Cokayne were examined by William Johnson, minister of Ipstones, accused of stating that 'the baptising of infants till they be able to give testimony of their faith' was anti-Christian, and also that 'there is no separation of the soul from the body at the day of death, but they both lie in the grave till the resurrection'. Garland was a member of Okey's dragoons, and served with distinction in the second civil war.³⁰ A third clear-cut case was Captain Henry Pretty of Ireton's regiment, who at Devizes on 6 September 1646 interrupted Sunday service 'assisted with one Master Ives and Master Lambe... and divers soldiers armed in a most irreverent manner, to the abominable disturbance of the whole Congregation'.³¹

John Mason, and John Pym of Pride's regiment may qualify as 'probables' on the strength of their association with Robert Everard, who was certainly a Baptist in 1649, when he produced the first edition of his *The Creation and Fall of Adam*. The second edition was bound with the first known joint General Baptist Confession of Faith and a second Everard work. Allan Betteridge has argued persuasively that Everard had a hand in the framing of the Confession,

²⁵ J. Turner, *Choice Experiences* (1654), 52-5, 82-9; Davies, *EHCG* 125; *Fenstanton*, 318, and *The Autobiography of Henry Newcome*, (Chetham Soc, 2 vols, 1853), 114; *ARPB* 25, 135.

²⁶ Aylmer SS 264-5; CP3 140-1; F-D, 73-5; Gentles, DMMP 286; P.R.O. C54/3693/23

²⁷ CP1, 409, 415-16; CP2, 274, 280; Gentles DMMP, 238, 274; P.R.O. C54/3691/20, C54/3693/23

²⁸ F-D 6-7, 591-2; 'Dangerous persons in Ireland', *TBHS* 3, 252-6; Wallis went to Spain in 1653, but absent or not, the correspondence would surely have mentioned any long-standing member.

²⁹ Gentles, *NMA*, 342; *Rushworth*, VI, 471

³⁰ A.G. Matthews, *Congregational Churches of Staffordshire*, 34; F-D, 293-4; CP2, 209, F-D, 621; Greaves, *DUE*, 123

³¹ *Gang* III, 30-31; F-D 117; Pretty went to Ireland; he is named as a Baptist in Barnard *CI*, 103, but no evidence has been found to connect him to Baptist organisations there.

noting that several clauses are recognisable in his 1649 work.³² On 8 March 1652 complaint was made that Everard was 'set on, borne up and encouraged by Lt Col Mason ... and by Capt Pimme'.³³ Chillenden may indeed have been converted whilst serving in Whalley's regiment. His pamphlet of August 1647 defined true churches as 'set forth in scriptures to be particular, congregated, visible saints depending on none but Christ' and did not mention believers' baptism as a qualification. But a respondent found it strange that 'I find not that he allows them to baptise by virtue of their gifts', a suggestive choice of ministerial function. Chillenden confessed to his congregation that 'I grew a little cold and careless in the matters of God, in those cold, mad and distempered years 1647 and 1648', suggesting he had been a member earlier.³⁴ It is unclear if the messenger of the General Assembly of the General Baptists in 1656 named John Miller was the soldier of those very common names who was agitator for Lambert's regiment in 1647, or if so whether he was then a Baptist.³⁵ It is hard to tell whether the agitator William Russell is to be identified as the General Baptist of 1660-1; there were several Baptists with that very common name.³⁶ Of the 'tentatives', John Okey and his wife were members of William Greenhill's independent congregation in the late 40s; on Lockier nothing further has been found.³⁷

Several other possible Baptist soldiers and officers who do not feature in Professor Tolmie's list might have been members in 1647.³⁸ Jeremy Ives, at least, should be added. He was with Lambe in Devizes in 1646, agitator of Hardress Waller's regiment in July 1647 and a trooper

³² R. Everard, *The Creation and Fall of Adam* (1649); idem, *Nature's Vindication* (1652); *The Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations* (1651), clauses 11-16; text in McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, (1911), 95-109; Betteridge, 'Early Baptists', *BQ* 25 (1974), 370; signatories, *ibid* 273-4.

³³ Nickolls, *OL* 81-2; ie John Mason, (Gentles, *NMA* 90) and John Pym (*F-D* 503); Firth identifies the Baptist governor of Jersey (1659), with the agitator (*CP* 1 437); *Fenstanton*, 293-4; Mason had been 'apprentice to Mr John Wedge, a coach harness maker', T. Ashton, *Satan in Samuels Mantle* (1659), 4.

³⁴ *Tolmie*, 157-8; E. Chillenden, *Preaching Without Ordination*, 2, 'From my quarters at Kingston upon Thames August 20 1647'; [B. Woodbridge], *Church members set in joynt* (1648) E422/3, 17; E. Chillenden, *Nathan's Parable*, (1653) E723(3), unpag.

³⁵ Whitley *MGA* I: 6-9; *CP* I, 176; Firth, *SC*, 327.

³⁶ Who was the agitator of Whalley's regiment? (*F-D* 216). A William Russell, painter of Candlewick St, was in trouble with High Commission in 1640 (*CSPD* 1640, 402); there was a fifth Monarchist signatory with John Rogers in 1654 (E 809/15, reprinted in *TBHS* 3 129-49); there was a Canterbury Baptist on 19 Feb 1655 (*Fenstanton*, 135); there was William Russell MD (d1702) (Betteridge, *G-Z* 3, 12); there was the signatory of *A Brief confession or declaration of Faith* (1660) E1017/14; on 27 May 1661 William Russell, tailor, of St Saviour, Southwark had been 'taken in a conventicle' H. Jenkinson and D. Powell, *Surrey Quarter Sess. Recs 1659-61*, (Surrey RS 13, [1934]), 168). There were at least 3 other sightings. It is hard even to establish how many people were involved, let alone allocate particular facts.

³⁷ R. Brenner, *Merchants and revolution*, (1993), 423n, 521n.

³⁸ Lawrence (*PAC*, 100) rejects the suggestion of T. Barnard (*CI*, 101) that Blackwood had been an army chaplain in the forties; D. Brown 'Christopher Blackwood', *BQ* 32 28-38 at 31.

of Whalley's regiment in May 1648.³⁹ Francis Freeman was also a Baptist in late 1646, when he supported the Baptists in a public dispute, though his 'denomination' is uncertain: 'I understand there is a new confession of faith making now in London' which, as he had heard, 'consisteth of 33 chapters or Articles; if free will be one, then I shall have free-will to choose'!! In early 1647, Freeman joined the army and became a captain. As a Seeker, he wrote *Light Vanquishing Darkness*, and was removed from his regiment by Okey in 1650.⁴⁰

Four others, each named John, might be categorised as probables, Vernon, Pearson, Rede or Reade and Freeman, plus Ralph Prentice. Vernon was certainly a baptist before he left for Ireland.⁴¹ Pearson and Prentice both signed *Heartbleedings*; Prentice was soldier-agitator for Pride's regiment. Pearson also signed a preface to the Baptist Daniel King's *A Way to Zion* on 23 March 1650.⁴² Poole governor John Reade was complained of in 1651 for his earlier favour to the Levellers, and because he had removed from the garrison persons 'known to walk as visible saints, and were cordially affected to the present government, because they refused to join with him in his way of dipping'. He later founded a church at his home village, Porton, Dorset.⁴³ John Freeman, signatory of the General Baptist *Faith and Practice* on behalf of Burley 'may have been the Lt Freeman who presented a petition from Rutland to Fairfax, 24 Nov 1648' against the personal treaty, especially given that there was a garrison at Burley on the Hill. The probability that he joined c1647 is suggested by the activity of Samuel Oates in Rutland in that year.⁴⁴

Of the 'possibles', Cornet John Phelps of Butler's regiment, an officer agitator in 1647, might be the signatory of the mysterious Phelpes-Heath Church. The name is given as Joseph Phelpes in the printed 1644 confession, but this is not decisive; in Stinton no 2 (which renders several names more accurately than did the printer) he appears as 'Jo Phelps'. Cornet Phelpes joined a regiment of which Bethel was a major in 1648. When Bethel had been a Captain in Whalley's regiment, his troop had been notorious for general redemptionism, 'the direct Jesuitical

³⁹ *Gang* III, 30-31; letter of officers and agitators from Reading, 6 July 1647, Worcester College: Clarke Papers vol 41, 166r-167v where Ives appears as the sole representative of Waller's regiment. I am extremely grateful to Professor Ian Gentles for this reference; Laurence, *PAC*, 138.

⁴⁰ F. Freeman *A Brief Description of a conference... Somerset* (1647), 24; *F-D*, 293; C. Firth, *Cromwell's Army* 307-8, 346-7; C. Hill, *WTUSD*, 191, 201; and see above chapter 7

⁴¹ Vernon is a real possibility. He was definitely a Baptist by the end of 1649 and probably earlier, in his preface to the Baptist E. Drapes' *Gospel Glory* (1649), E472/27, Td 20 Nov, Vernon wrote against the rejection of formal ordinances, in which he himself had been 'once miserably entangled', the theme is continued in *Heart-Bleedings* (1650): Underhill, *Confessions of Faith* (1853), 293-310.

⁴² *Heart-Bleedings*.. (1650) E954/13 Td 28 Feb; Prentice was an agitator (along with John Mason) in Pride's regiment in October 1647 and became an ensign in it the following month, (*CP* I 436, 437)

⁴³ Bayley, *Dorset*, 343-5; A. Tucker, 'Porton Baptist Church' *TBHS* 1, (1908), 56-61; a Captain John Read was granted honorary admission to the Leathersellers Company, 21 Jan 1646, W. Black, *HLC*, 101; J.D. Neville in *G-Z*, sub Reade; for a John Reade preaching at Swann Alley May 1656, see *Thurloe SP* V, 60-1.

⁴⁴ *To his Excellency*... 24 Nov 1648, B.L.669.f13(47)); Betteridge, 'Early Baptists', *BQ* 25, 358, 374

way' as Baxter called it. A little later Thomas Hall complained against 'a soldier, Lt Phelps, as I remember he called himself, a dipper etc.... His sermon was as full of errors as a dog is full of fleas: univeral redemption, free will, dipping, against baptising etc.' Perhaps this was the same man.⁴⁵ Consolation Fox was probably the journeyman butcher of those names of Eastcheap, London, assessed for the poll tax at 5/- in 1641. He was listed as officer agitator with Captain Francis Allen for Ingoldsby's regiment (Oct 1647) and then as captain-lieutenant to Ingoldsby. There is no indication of his views at this stage, but he was a Particular Baptist in the 1650s.⁴⁶ Colonel Robert Bennet might have been a member by January 1649, for William Allen found it necessary to excuse his failure to protest against the king's execution: 'Colonel Bennet, he lay sick in the west while that business was done'.⁴⁷ 'John Braunson', an ensign in Lilburne's regiment who wrote against the Levellers on 29 November 1647, might be the 'John Branson' baptized by Richard Blunt in January 1642. It is conceivable that one or both might be John Bramston (who may have begun his military career as ensign in Rochford's regiment in 1642), lieutenant in Hesilriges regiment in 1648-50, then major in Morgan's dragoons, arrested with other Baptists over the 'Overton plot'.⁴⁸

In summary then, only five of the Particular Baptists given (Packer, Hobson, Beaumont, Spencer and Webb), were certainly Baptists in 1647, though there may be added 'probables': Axtell, Brayfield, Deane, Turner, Vernon, Empson (just) and Shepard (dubious). To three certain Generals (Garland, Pretty and Denne) should be added Ives, plus three 'probables' John Mason, Pym, Freeman and Everard. The total of fourteen probable officer Baptists in 1647 is consistent with Captain Richard Deane's letter to the Bishop of Lincoln: 'by the best information I could have there were not at any time before the year 1649, twenty Anabaptists in any sort of command in the whole army' though 'in and after that year 1649, their numbers did increase'. The merchant William Allen, who was abandoning the General Baptists wrote in 1659 that 'I am informed, that there was no Anabaptists in the Army above the degree of captain and but six of these' in 1649.

⁴⁵ *Burrage* 2, 305; T.Hall, *The Pulpit Guarded*, (1651) E628/4, 18, Baxter, *RB* 53; 'of London, gent' and quarter-master in Brook's regiment, Gentles DMMP, 320; *F-D* 82, 85, 295.

⁴⁶ Dale, *Members*, 65; *CP* 1 161, 437; Gentles NMA 160; *ARPB*, III, 189, 95, 203, 214; Francis Allen was named as a Baptist in 1656 by C.Fowler, *'Daemonium Meridianum... Second Part*, (1656), 5, 47

⁴⁷ Allen, 30 May 1659. *K-NI*, 393-4; for Bennett, Woolrych, *From Commonwealth to Protectorate*, *passim*; M.Coate, *Cornwall in the Great Civil War* (1933), 272-4; White thinks 'Bennet became a Baptist, though perhaps not until the early 1650s' (*G-ZI*, 57).

⁴⁸ *A Remonstrance ... Lilburne's regt* (1647) E417/15; Peacock, *Army Lists*, 32; Davies, *EHCG* 125; Firth, *SP* 241-2, 253-4. *F-D* 307, 309; *Burrage* 2, 304; Bramston was killed in a shipwreck off the West Indies, Oct 1656, *CP* 3, 77-80

Of course, both Deane and (especially) Allen, were trying to minimise Baptist complicity in the King's execution, and Allen's figure is too low. But the broad picture they suggest is credible.⁴⁹

2 Baptists and the Politics of the Army

These numbers are relevant to the overall pattern of Army politics in 1647. From the suggested list of nine Baptist officer agitators, Empson, Wallis, Pretty, Chillenden, Creed, Brayfield, Holmes, Deane and John Mason, we have only one certain Baptist (Pretty), and five other 'probables', Brayfield, Deane, Mason, Empson and Chillenden. Of the soldiers, none is a certain Baptist except Ives, though Everard is likely; Shepard and Russell are possible. Also, more Particular Baptists than Generals are dubious: the ratio between them is not three but two to one.

It may be that the attribution of Baptist views in 1647 to military men who are known to have held them later rests partly on the military or political associations between them. Many Baptists served in the regiment of Robert Lilburne, later commanded by Heselrige. Now *A Remonstrance sent from Col Lilburne's regiment* to Fairfax in November 1647 was directed against the Levellers, the 'maintainers and abettors of non-subjection to authority', 'malcontented spirits' who 'divide the Army into Parties and factions'. Amongst the twenty-four signatories were Hobson, Holmes, Deane, Turner, Branson and Strange, and it cannot be excluded that they were already members in a 'large Particular Baptist group'.⁵⁰ It could be suggested that the Calvinistic Baptist views of such men predisposed them to prefer social orderliness and discipline under the Grandees to the hazards of democratic discussion, so that these Particular Baptists hastened to associate together in statements and actions which displayed loyalty to the high command; the fact that they were Baptists, whose loyalty to the state was in principle under suspicion, would have increased their determination to prove it.

There is undoubtedly something in this, and it is tempting to presume further (in this case) that the six had already joined the Particular Baptists, on the grounds that it helps explain their political positions. Similarly, the fact that the Baptist William Packer was helped by the later Baptist John Gladman to break up a meeting of Leveller soldiers at St Albans on 24 April 1648 could be taken as evidence that Gladman had joined already: he was forward in acting in this way because, like Packer, he was a member.⁵¹ Gladman, and others, may have come to this political role by this religious route, but would be impermissible to presume it just because the proposition is reasonable. For so, equally, is the counter-proposition that the political enthusiasm of such men for facing down Levellers played a role in the fixing of their religious allegiances. Such political

⁴⁹ *Ivimey* I, 293-6; Allen to Baxter, 30 May 1659: *K-N1*, 393-4:

⁵⁰ *A Remonstrance ... Lilburne's regiment* (1647) E417(15), 5-6; *Tolmie*, 167

⁵¹ Thus it appears in *Tolmie*, 168; Gentles, *NMA*, 244-5

experience could have helped persuade them that the Particular Baptists were the people of God, steadfast in their desire for victory against licentiousness, not only of the Cavaliers but also of the forces of anarchy on their own side: given their predilection for social orderliness and military discipline, such men were drawn towards association with the militant Calvinist tendency which best expressed their political and social hopes and thoughts.

Since both proposition and counter-proposition are reasonable, perhaps both processes were involved. But there are reasons to think that in many cases, politics came first. First, the lack of evidence for early Baptist views in so many cases is hard to explain. The Army radicals and Grandees had many enemies with an interest in exposing large-scale Baptist penetration if it existed. Then there is the evidence of Ireland. It is suggested that army Particular Baptists were in a majority of about three to one in the period 1647-9 (my own list makes it about two to one); if politics had little causal impact on religious affiliation, one would expect a similar proportion in the army in Ireland. But in the early 1650s only one officer in Ireland (Henry Pretty) and no soldiers or chaplains, are known to have been associated with the General Baptists.⁵² Now it is believed that the lots drawn by the army commanders in 1649 were not rigged to favour one tendency or another.⁵³ (Thus, for example, the Particular Baptists were not selected for the Irish duty as more reliable and enthusiastic; General Baptists were not disproportionately disbanded (or exported) because of a greater tendency to insubordinacy.) If this is correct, then the statistical anomaly can be explained either by pure chance, or on the basis that a high proportion of the Particular Baptists in Ireland in 1652/3 (many of them military men) were converted there. By this time, of course, the Army was a different institution, engaged in different work.

The foregoing may suggest that we could exaggerate the extent to which the politicisation of the Army depended on or involved leadership by experienced Baptists or other veterans of the sectarian movement. In 1647, as Woolrych suggested, 'The soldiery were reacting spontaneously to their own experiences and expressing their own concerns'. For Murray Tolmie, 'Baptists played a leading role in the spontaneous organization that sprang up to give expression to the grievances of officers and men.... Their experience and their aspirations ensured that leadership was available'. His view that 'the political organization of the lower ranks of the army in the spring of 1647 had been essentially a sectarian rather than a Leveller achievement', was useful in correcting the view that the movement was chiefly a response to Leveller agitation, but it seems to over-estimate the centrality of the sectaries, or at least, of the Baptists.⁵⁴

⁵² The survival of the 1653 Particular Baptist correspondence might skew the evidence, but if there were more than one or two army general Baptists in Ireland the fact would probably have survived.

⁵³ This is the judgement of Gentles, *NMA*, 352

⁵⁴ Woolrych, *Soldiers and Statesmen*, 84; Tolmie, 168

Most of the disputants in the army debates (on any estimate) were not members of gathered churches. By 1647, the argument was no longer between two fixed compulsory systems, Episcopacy and Presbyterianism, but within the Independent-Erastian coalition Independents of all stripes sought a massive retreat of the state from the imposition of religion upon the population; there was a consensus that (political practicalities permitting) full toleration should be allowed for almost all variants of Protestant Christianity. Now since the discussion at Putney started from the shared view that 1) individual consciences were to be allowed maximum scope, and 2) the state's business was to promote only a broadly defined religion, it could not treat of what was true or false in the realm of formal ordinances. All participants urged their views on the basis of what God's providence had demonstrated through their victories thus far; for the future, they sought to determine what was good for the Army, the godly people, and the nation. Within the terms of this discussion, congregational affiliations were irrelevant, potentially damaging, and could not be canvassed as part of the practical agenda.⁵⁵

These considerations may have worked against any tendency to build gathered churches in the Army. Baxter gave evidence about the request of the officers of Cromwell's Ironsides to form a gathered church about 1644 (presumably on the congregational basis which united them), but there is no evidence of gathered churches meeting in the army during the war, or later in the period of the greatest breakdown in military discipline. Clearly, discussions on religion took place, and there must have been unofficial exercises, perhaps open to all, as in the case of Whalley's regiment, where general redemptionist ideas were entrenched early on.⁵⁶ If Edmund Chillenden was indeed a General Baptist at the time he published *Preaching Without Ordination* in 1647 it would suggest that he was deliberately concealing his affiliation; this cannot have been (by this time) for fear of military reprisals. Light can be thrown on the problem by considering two people who certainly were Baptists, and who were involved in the political battle in this year – Paul Hobson and Thomas Collier. Hobson wrapped what seems to be a fairly orthodox particular electionism into an extraordinary, mystical religion of the heart. The resting place of the weary but faithful saints in *A Garden Inclosed* recalls a clause in the Particular Baptist confession in which believers on joining the church are 'inrolled among his household servants, to be under his heavenly conduct and government, to lead their lives in his walled sheepfold and watered garden, to have communion here with the saints, that they may be made to be partakers of their inheritance in the Kingdom of God'.⁵⁷ But in Hobson's hands, the appeal of the image is detached from membership of a physical church, and from such prosaic duties as those set out in

⁵⁵ The two famous editions are A. Woodhouse, ed *Puritanism and Liberty*, and C. Firth, *The Clark Papers I*

⁵⁶ Gentles, *NMA*, esp ch 4; *Reliquianae Baxterianae*, 53, 51

⁵⁷ P.Hobson, *A Garden Inclosed*, E1188/3; *The Confession of Faith... anabaptists ...* [1644 E12/24, #34

the confession. Those of the garden 'live as saints, they walk as saints .. they live in loving and love in living; ordinances are but shells, but saints while they are cracking the shells to others, they are eating the kernel themselves.'⁵⁸

Hobson certainly remained a member for a time, but the tension between the mystical and ecclesial concepts of communion is evident: in *Practical Divinity*, he sought to 'unite experienced Christians in the bond and fellowship of the spirit'. Later, he withdrew from the church having rejected formal ordinances. On rejoining in 1654 after a sexual affair, he admitted having been seduced by the Devil, who 'deludes poor souls', 'persuading men under specious pretences to allegorise scriptures, and turn all into a more spiritual understanding and enjoyment than at present they have attained to, who stand by the rule of truth in the practice of gospel order and ordinances... which ends in carnality, though at the first it doth not so appear, which I can sadly witness...'. The prodigal son was welcomed by Thomas Gower, through gritted teeth: 'I know it may seem strange to many that he should now appear in the House of God... who formerly walked in notions and pretences of spirituality, though in wantonness against Christ'.⁵⁹ Edmund Chillenden, who also succumbed to sexual temptation, also attributed it to his having fallen off from formal ordinances 'in those cold, mad and distempered years 1647 and 1648'. It seems that a similar rejection of ordinances also befell Turner, Vernon and probably others; this was connected to a tendency most prevalent (in civilian life) about 1649-51, which had gained ground earlier in the army.⁶⁰

Both Hobson and Collier have been plausibly accused of antinomianism, which tended to undermine the basis for conformity with church rules and routines. But, for many, there were connections between both these tendencies and their experience in the New Model. For Cromwell and others, the root of the matter lay not in formal membership in this or that church, but in the faith and spiritual commitment of the individual. From 1645 onwards, the outlook of such non-denominational antinomian clergymen as William Dell and John Saltmarsh fitted best with an increasingly exalted mood. Saltmarsh's *Smoke in the Temple* was criticised by Hanserd Knollys, but he was invited nonetheless to contribute a preface to Collier's *The Marrow of Christianity*. Collier, thought Saltmarsh, had arrived at 'some pretious truths': he aimed to set up the kingdom of god in spirit, and to draw believers by that more into spirit; and that no difference of outward administrations, or ordinances, should divide Christians that are baptised into one spirit; which

⁵⁸ Hobson, *Practical Divinity*, (1646), 86-7 quoted, Tolmie, 63

⁵⁹ Hobson, *Practical Divinity*, (1646), title page; idem, *Fourteen Queries* (1654) E1492/3, A3v-r; for Hobson, Greaves, *Saints and Rebels*, 133-56

⁶⁰ E. Chillenden *Nathan's Parable* (1653) E723(3), Td Dec 1653, [p2]; J. Turner, *Choice Experiences* (1654), 111-22 where (seemingly about 1649/50) she and her husband were also influenced by this 'seeking' tendency; for Vernon see his preface to Drapes' *Gospel Glory* (1649)

truth I did much rejoice to see from his pen'.⁶¹ On 29 September 1647, Collier preached at Army headquarters at Putney on the text 'Behold I build a new heaven and a new earth'. He thought Christ would not come to reign personally, but would 'have a glorious kingdom in the saints... only the glorious light of this new creation will put an end to divisions amongst Christians... not magisterial power setting up uniformity, but that one Spirit of light and truth that must bring the Saints into this unity.' The experiential unity of the saints is central, as for Hobson, but assumes here a more 'political' shape, arising not in a present 'garden enclosed' but from an act of God in the future creation of a new world.

In the great debates over engagements, religious toleration, and the nation's future, conducted in an atmosphere of mounting excitement touched with millennial expectations, divisions between rival sets of formal church ordinances were irrelevant. As Collier himself put it in December 1648, 'let your end and actings be for the accomplishment of this great work in hand, the bringing forth of righteousness to the nation... let the oppressed go free, that your break every yoke, and then shall your light break forth as the morning'; only then, 'we may no longer talk of subjects liberty but now at last we may know it'.⁶² Collier helped to express the fervid, corporate spirit developing in the New Model Army and was also influenced by it. Preachers of his stamp spoke in sermons to their military audience as if it were a single huge gathered church – as, in a manner of speaking, it was – distinguished not by formal observances but by God's providential approval manifest in its victories, and the movement of his Spirit within its members. They were caught up in the excitement of these years, which their ideas expressed but did not create. Like Hobson, Collier came to repudiate his earlier views. He recalled that in works (he specifically named the *Marrow*) of the revolutionary period, there were passages which 'may seem to derogate from the glorious truths of the Gospel'. These included 'the ordinances of Christ in the church, as baptism, breaking of bread, prayer, and church fellowship, the kingdom and reign of Christ at the second coming, etc, all which precious truths I own and witness to, and if in any of my books you find any thing contrary to these, disown it; for so do I'.⁶³

This helps explain why (despite their loyal political and military service) in the Army in the period of crisis from 1647 to 1649, there is no evidence for Particular Baptists churches special to the Army. These appear in Scotland and Ireland in the early 1650s. Their new role as an alien occupying force may have encouraged military men towards exercises separate from civilians. Probably the new development reflected a change from a mobile force in temporary

⁶¹ Knollys, *The Shining of a flaming fire* (1646); this is fraternal in tone, and Knollys had contributed a preface to Collier's *The Exhaltation...* (1646); T. Collier, *The Marrow of Christianity* (1647).

⁶² Collier, *A Vindication of the Army Remonstrance*. E477/6 (datable to Dec 1648) epistle Dedic.

⁶³ Collier, *The Personal Appearing* (1657), epistle dedic.

field or billet accommodation to settled garrison duties, but perhaps the most important reason was the change in the politics of the Army. No longer an instrument of political and religious struggle in which a militant unity of the spirit appeared to undermine the desirability of divisive formal ordinances, it had become largely an instrument of political discipline and control. The process is most evident in Ireland. Here, Particular Baptist organisations were based almost entirely in the military and administrative staffs organised under Ireton, Ludlow and Fleetwood. They attracted militant anti-catholic Calvinists, steeled in the brutal military struggle against the Irish and against such concessions to elements in the pre-existing English establishment as were favoured by more loosely organised Independents, and later by Henry Cromwell. The issue cannot be investigated here, but during the early 1650s, it is clear, the Particular Baptists in Ireland were in several respects acting as a unified political force. It is very likely that in many cases, experience in Ireland had propelled them towards Baptist views, and this provides further reason to doubt whether all or even most were members earlier.

3 Baptists and Levellers

One of the most famous Levellers, Richard Overton, has for long been associated with the Baptists. Unhappily it has not proved possible to penetrate far into the Stygian obscurity of his early career. The conjectures that he was a Cambridge student from Warwickshire and later became an actor are all plausible. It has been suggested that he was the son of Valentine Overton of Bedworth Warks (d 1647) who had sons Richard, William and Henry, 'often said to have been a relative of Richard the Leveller; he also had a daughter Katherine' married to Samuel Clarke.⁶⁴ A pamphlet probably attributable to Overton suggests that the author had attended Cambridge but had 'run away' from it, and Venn gives a man of those names who matriculated from Queens' at Easter 1631.⁶⁵ Now in July 1631 it was charged that a Richard Garland of Ruislip, yeoman, had 'made or caused to be made' a counterfeit passport for its bearer 'an honest tradesman of the parish of Bedworth, named Richard Overton, who had been utterly ruined by a fire that had destroyed all his goods, and was journeying to Buckland, co Kent to seek comfort and aid from his brother and other kindred there'; (this might suggest a much more distant, and frosty, relation to Valentine). Efforts to follow the trail into Kent have failed, though a John Overton published a book about the county.⁶⁶ Overton's connection with Nicholas Tew, probably a preacher with the

⁶⁴ M. Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre* (1980), 238-40, 245-8; G. Aylmer, 'Gentlemen Levellers', *P&P* 49, (1970) 122, son Richard, christened 14 July 1595: too old for the Cambridge student.

⁶⁵ 'Mercurius might have been a scholar, had he not run away from Cambridge', *Defence of Mercurius Message Defended*, 10, quoted by M. Gimelfarb-Brack, *Liberte, egalite, fraternite, justice* (1979), 509

⁶⁶ Jeaffreson, *MCR* iii, 39: 9 July 1631; *A New Description of Kent*, see Wing, *S.T.C.*, IV, 677

Lambe congregation in 1643, has been noticed. Overton's biographer thought it unlikely that the confession signed by him was signed in 1615 and the present writer agrees. The fact that the confession is in Latin, and has found its way into the Waterlander archives does suggest an approach by him to them, but it was unsuccessful; English Overtons appear in the membership records, but no Richard.⁶⁷

Amongst the list of names of those baptised by Blunt and Blacklock in early 1642 is one which may be regarded as extremely suspicious. This was a 'Martin Mainprise'. Only one family (from Yorkshire) is listed on the International Genealogical Index under this surname, and it is possible that it was a pseudonym. Ms Gimmelfarb-Brack gave 1642/3 as the most probable date for Overton's baptism, and conjectured that in the period from April 1642 to February 1643 in which he seems to have published no pamphlets, Overton had been imprisoned for debt.⁶⁸ Mainprise or Mainprise, of course, was the act of obtaining a prisoner's release by standing surety, a topic on which Sir Edward Coke had issued a treatise. Could the author of the famous Martin Marpriest tracts have made an earlier joke about Martin Mainprise?⁶⁹ At least three members of the Blunt-Blacklock churches were associated with radicalism. Blacklock himself accompanied Lilburne to Parliament on 28 Dec 1648.⁷⁰ A member with him about 1643 was Clement Writer, the factor at the clothing market at Blackwell Hall accused of having written Overton's book on mortalism. In 1643, Writer's partner Lawrence Saunders issued an exposition of free grace positions, *The Fullness of God's Love*, which led to his imprisonment in the Fleet. Walwyn and Samuel Eames, a second Blunt-Blacklock member, acted as sureties in the sum of £200.⁷¹ Keith Lindley judges that 'Saunders powerful advocacy of universalism and a practical Christianity which attended to the needy and vulnerable shows a closeness of mind to that of Walwyn, and his early death in 1645 robbed the Levellers of another future leader.'

⁶⁷ MS B1353 of the Doopsgezinde collection, now in Amsterdam Gemeente Archief, 1120/121/6a; Sprunger *DP* 86-7 and idem, 'English Puritans and Anabaptists' *MQR* 46 (1972), 113-28 at 121-2 cites Thomas and John; no Richard appears in the Waterlander 'Dooopboek' [G..A., 1120/116, Micro 973 vol 7].

⁶⁸ Gimelfarb-Brack, *Liberte, egalite, fraternite*, 77-9, 89-90

⁶⁹ [E.Coke], *A little treatise of Baile and Mainprise* (1635). There were reasons to give a false name. The immersion ceremony may easily have attracted public attention; hostile witnesses might note down and use the name of a man in trouble with the law. Obviously all this is pure conjecture.

⁷⁰ Samuel Blacklock immersed in 1642 (*Burrage* 2, 303) was probably 1] the apprentice of William Fowke and then Hugo Warde, freed 18 May 1641 (Barber Surgeons Register of Freedoms, 1522-1665, Guildhall Micro 5265/1, 97); 2] the witness in July 1647 to the ousting of an Independent from the City militia, and 3] the man who went with Lilburne to Parliament in 1648 (*CP* I, 155, II 266; Lilburne, *LFL* 35).

⁷¹ Eames, a clothier of St Margaret Lothbury, had two apprentices and a servant in 1642, two houses in 1643, and was a vestryman, churchwarden and auditor in 1650s, (Lindley, *London*, 285); he invested £100 in the Irish Adventurers, (R. Greaves, *BDBR*, I, 242); he was assessed for 4s 4d for the poor on 1 June 1642 and 8s on 5 June 1643; on 27 Nov 1642, he contributed £2 to Parliament: Guildhall MS 4352/1 ff 149r, 151v; *ibid* 189v, 195-8 for role from 1650-52, after which he disappears

Overton may well never have been a member with Eames and Writer, but his confession, his connection with Tew, and his activity as a moderator between Lambe and Batte in February 1646 all suggest association with a Baptist congregation. In August 1646 an officer acting for the Lords gave him as 'Overton, an Anabaptist, the printer ... calling himself Martin Marr-priest', noting that there was there a manuscript of a book on baptism and the Lord's supper waiting to be printed. Edwards, who ordinarily called his heretics by their right names, also referred to him as an Anabaptist.⁷² It is not possible here to discuss further Overton's political views. He had probably left the Baptists before the Levellers emerged, but it seems unlikely that political differences were at the root of it. He retained his belief, which corresponded to that of the General Baptists, in a radical and complete separation between church and state. His only recorded dispute with them was over mortalism.

Lesser figures include John Rede or Reade. On 29th March 1651 the Mayor and aldermen of Poole wrote to the Council of State that he had allowed the town to become 'a refuge to exorbitant levellers and those grand enemies to just liberty, civility and godliness'; in March and April 1648 [ie 1649??] 'being a time of great danger when the Levellers rose in actual arms against the State, he did absent himself from Poole'; he 'gives shelter to Levellers and raises them to places of great trust'; he had disarmed much of the Militia, 'and the rest of the well affected inhabitants, because they would not join with him in his levelling design', and he had cashiered those who 'refused to join with him in his way of dipping'. In the army, too, there was Robert Everard ('Buff Coat'), who may already have been a Baptist in October 1647, when he 'spoke boldly and eloquently at Putney'; on 27 October 1647 Everard was entrusted with carrying to Army Headquarters at Putney the first version of the Agreement of the People, just agreed.⁷³

Jeremiah Ives was reported to have been preaching in Wales about 1646 with another General Baptist, Hugh Evans. On 6 September 1646, Ives, Captain Henry Pretty and Thomas Lambe, interrupted a church service at Devizes, 'armed in a most irreverent manner, to the abominable disturbance of the whole congregation'. On 3 January 1647, a trooper named Ives preached at Buckingham, arousing violent opposition from local cavaliers and opponents of lay preaching; soldiers of Col Herbert's regiment came to his aid, and a captain and sergeant were

⁷² *Gang* I, 81-2; [L. Saunders], *The Fullness of God's Love* (1643), E1158/1; CSPD 1643. 506-07 24 Dec 1643; Lindley, *London*, 397; HMC 6th Report, 130; *Gang* II, 17-18; on Overton's authorship, J. Frank, *The Levellers*, (1955) appendix.

⁷³ Bayley, *Dorset* pp 343-5; Woolrych, *Soldiers and Statesmen*, 204, 214-15; Everard was identified by Firth as 'Buff coat', [CP I, 258, 276]; he was more hopeful of an agreement than some agitators, and Cromwell seems to have had a good opinion of him, *ibid*, 342-44. It seems 'buff-coats' were cheaper, because undyed: Richardson defended 'buff coated' chaplains in 1649: S. Richardson, *An Answer to the London Ministers*. *Gerees* (1649) E540/8, 19

wounded.⁷⁴ Jeremiah Ives was a radical in politics, as well as religion. On 6 July 1647, as the 'agitator' of Hardress Waller's regiment, he co-signed a letter of protest at the Presbyterian purge of the London militia. Later in the year, he was one of five leading radicals imprisoned by order of the Commons. On 23 November, the House committed Thomas Prince and Samuel Chidley to the Gatehouse, and Jeremy Ives, Thomas Taylor, and William Larnier to Newgate, for 'a seditious and contemptuous avowing' of the Levellers' *Agreement of the People* in the Army; a hostile pamphleteer also accused them of planning to kill Charles I, claiming that 'since these votes, the persons are juggled away, and not imprisoned'. By May 1648, Ives was a trooper in Whalley's horse regiment; about a year later, he received a commission as its chaplain, and served the regiment in this capacity during its Scottish service, from May to October 1650.⁷⁵

We do not have direct knowledge of Ives's ideas in the 1640s, but something of his style is probably reflected in later works. Ives clearly understood that public speaking is a performance art. He succeeded in infuriating his opponents, facing in a debate in 1657 'a tumultuous auditory: some pulling and hauling me; others threatening to throw me over the gallery.'⁷⁶ He seems to have maintained his populist approach in the more sober days after 1660, to the apparent discomfort of his co-religionists. These 'have not a little censured thy customary carriages to stir up the people to rudeness and laughter at the late disputes, by the sign of shaking thy head, or waving thy hat over thy head ... people say, it smells of ranter or atheism'. His printed works were sharp and popular in tone, unencumbered with the heavy armour of syllogism and proof text; the writer's taste for poking fun at his opponents may well indicate his oratorical style. Thomas Ellwood conceded that Ives knew both logic and scripture, but charged that he was too fond of his drink and that 'his chief Art lay in tickling the humours of rude, unlearned and injudicious hearers; thereby insinuating himself into their good opinion.'⁷⁷

Cornet Henry Denne, of course, was a leader of the Leveller mutineers at Burford, helping Major Francis White to prepare the demands for presentation to Fairfax, before betraying his comrades and issuing a public recantation and attack on the Levellers. (Packer was prominent amongst the party which suppressed the mutiny.)⁷⁸ Samuel Oates continued his radical career into

⁷⁴ Richards, *PMW*, 209; *Gang III*, 30-31; *A Bloody Plot Discovered* [1647, E371(18); *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer*, E371/12, 3 January, 394-5

⁷⁵ *CJ* 5 368; Worcester College: Clarke Papers vol 41, 166r-167v; *A Bloody Independent Plot Discovered*, (1647) E419/2 Td 2 Dec, 9; 'To the Supreme Authority', in Wolfe, *LM* 237-41; Laurence, PAC 138

⁷⁶ J Ives, *Confidence Questioned* [1658 Td 21 Dec (1657), To Reader.

⁷⁷ T.Rudyard, *The Anabaptists Printed Proposals*, 23-4; T.Ellwood, *The History of the Life of Thomas Elwood*, (1765), 313

⁷⁸ No evidence has been found for the claim (Tolmie *TS*, 189) that Denne attended the Whitehall debates: *CP I* gives only Colonel and Capt Denne or Deane; for Burford, see Brailsford, *The Levellers*, 512-9; Gentles, *NMA*, 342-5; Denne's recantation is *The Levellers' Design Discovered* (May 1649)

1649 and beyond. In February, there was revealed Leveller organisation in six counties, Kent, 'Hertfordshire, Bucking, Oxford, Cambridge, Rutlandshire etc', and Oates was surely the leading figure in the last named. In short, not only Lamb but all his known lieutenants were political radicals. In 1647, a hostile pamphleteer noted of the mutiny at Ware that 'the agreement of the people of the Spittle-congregation was sent thither for the souldiers to wear in their hats'; the joke would not have been a joke unless readers understood it to bear some relation to the truth. Support for the *Agreement of the People* ranged wider than Lamb's congregation, but the record leaves no doubt of its central involvement in the agitation. All the preachers named by Edwards as evangelists associated with Lamb are also individually identifiable with the Levellers, not as arms-length 'sympathisers' or fellow travellers, but in their political activity in London and/or in the struggle in the Army. The view that the political record of the church's entire known leadership represents no more than the opinion of four separate individuals must be rejected.⁷⁹

In the first months of 1649, the Levellers urged the men of Kent to 'appoint meetings in every division of your county, and there to select faithful men of public spirits, to take care that the petition be sent to the hands of the most active men in every town, to unite the town in those desires of common right, and to take their subscriptions', urging them to a meeting on the 23rd. This was signed from Dartford on 9 January by John Lilburne, Mark Wildman, John Davies and Richard Woodward. None of these are known to have been Baptists, but the Baptists certainly had members in Dartford.⁸⁰ In a list of Baptist conventiclers (1647/9) below, the insertion of 'and' before Richard Gascoigne suggests that not only he Harrison and Mumford, but also Galting (Gateland), Pace, Rudd and Snoade may all have been of Dartford.⁸¹ Those charged seem to have

⁷⁹ [W. Frost], *A Declaration of Some proceedings*, (1648) E427/6, 22; Mercurius Pragmaticus Nov 16-22 E416(19), 76; B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the 17th Century*, (1996), 55-6

⁸⁰ [W. Frost], *A Declaration of Some proceedings*, (1648) E427/6, 22-3

⁸¹ *Calendar of Assize Records: Kent indictments Charles I*, (1995): Indictment at Maidstone assizes 5 August 1647 of William Jeoffreys*, yeoman, the wife of David Jeoffreys shearman, of Bradbourne, the wife of Edward Stephenson of Sevenoaks, the wife* of Thomas Smith of Southfleet, maltster, James Galting *{given as Gateland, miller, in the writ}, William Pace* {labourer}, Robert Rudd* {collier}, Thomas Snoade* glover, and Richard Gascoigne* {labourer} of Dartford, John Smith* and Ralph Butcher* watermen, and John Whitehead*, tailor of Gravesend, John Crower [*surname missing] of Horton Kirby tailor, Dorothy Stephens* wife of Thomas Stephens of Southfleet, yeoman, John Marshall* maltster, and Margaret Marshall*, his wife, of Horton Kirby, Elizabeth Booth*, spinster, Walter Rugg*, waterman, of Gravesend, Richard Harrison* of Dartford gent, George Langridge* of Darenth, husbandman, John Mumford of Dartford cobbler, Margery Snoade wife of Thomas Snoade, Dorothy Rudd wife of Robert Rudd, Rachel Gascoigne wife of Richard Gascoigne, and Elizabeth Harrison wife of Richard Harrison, for attending a religious conventicle. On 1 Mar 1647 being recusant, they and others unknown attended conventicles in their respective parishes, *ibid* no2525, pp518-9. Occupations {inserted} from the writ of capias, no 2587, p530 issued at Sevenoaks 5 Aug 1647 and returned to the Maidstone Assizes 7 March 1648; asterisked members of this group are also named in a writ of capias issued for Maidstone assizes 10 July 1649 *Calendar of Assize Records: Kent indictments 1649-1659*, (1989) [no 93, p18], where William Jeoffreys is given as a shearman and his wife is added; there is no indication as to the charge.

been members of a single congregation, with members in the coastal towns of North Kent (Dartford, Gravesend and Southfleet), and villages along the River Dart, (Darenth and Holme Kirby). Perhaps Jeffreys, ministered to them. Of course, there were Baptists in the Weald and other inland areas; still it is suggestive that the Levellers chose Dartford both for the issue of their appeal and as venue for the meeting on 23 January. The number of labourers, husbandmen and others in the Assize list also suggest that the appeal of the Baptists was not confined to the more prosperous middling sort and extended quite far down the social scale.

That the General Baptists of the Lambe and other groups supported the Levellers has almost become a truism (though not the less true for that). The parallel truism that they were opposed by the Particular Baptists must, as the Walwyn-Eames-Writer linkages may already suggest, be treated with care. It was only gradually, of course, that the Levellers crystallised as a party. On 10 August 1645, Hanserd Knollys preached at St Helen's Bishopsgate for the release of John Lilburne, 'and honour him, Lord, for he hath honoured thee'.⁸² A couple of years later, Knollys might have been less supportive. But at least two important individuals would not have hesitated, and retained Leveller sympathies till late 1648 or even later.

The first of these was Edward Harrison. An Oxford graduate, he had become vicar of Kensworth, near St Albans, and may well have been converted by George Kendall or Robert Baldwin in 1644/5; on 2 Sept 1645 he was at Newport Pagnell acting as treasurer for the Eastern Association.⁸³ The Reading Presbyterian Christopher Fowler reported that he had appeared against a Baptist, 'one Harrison', 'before some hundreds' 'at a publique meeting in Hampshire', apparently about 1646, but in that year Edwards placed him at Petty France in London.⁸⁴ For several months between 1647 and 1649 he acted as chaplain in Thomas Harrison's horse regiment. Writing from Kensworth in March 1649, he advocated very radical views. God had given 'his common gifts severally for the benefit of all, both governors and governed'; but the relationship between the two depended upon 'mutual consent'; the object of government was 'the mutual succour, help, commodity, freedom, peace, security and preservation of one another'. The calling of a magistrate had been ordained by God and was 'an honourable calling'. But Harrison thought most magistrates did not act in a disinterested fashion, tending instead 'to uphold and advance the interest of their will and power', whilst most people 'account it their glory to be vassals and slaves to great titles and gay clothes'. He thought the government and its servants must be 'elected, trusted and authorised by the people' in whom 'true sovereignty' rests, citing Parliament, the Agreement of the People and the Army Remonstrance as authorities. In his review

⁸² *Mercuricus Pragmaticus*, no 10, 16-22 Nov 1647, 73; *Gang* I, 40

⁸³ See Venn; W. Whitley, 'Edward Harrison of Petty France', *BQ* 7 (1935) 214-20

⁸⁴ Fowler, *Daemonium Meridionem* 2nd part, 24, 52 Laurence, *PAC* 135; *Gang* III 81

of the chief forms of government set out by Aristotle, Harrison clearly feared the dangers of tyranny and self interest posed by monarchy and oligarchy, and favoured 'democracy, the power of the people, when mean and indifferent men are by them chosen; neither of the richest, to avoid tyranny, nor of the poorest, to avoid confusion'.

Harrison was unimpressed with the new regime, which had been granted 'a glorious opportunity for freeing of this nation from all its oppressors and oppressions by the laying of a foundation of liberty, peace and satisfaction to all serious men of all parties.' The "country-man" had 'much rejoiced in the extraordinary action of sifting the House of Commons, wholly taking away the House of Lords, erecting an High court of Justice, trying and executing the King and Lords (as the pulling down an old House ready to fall upon and ruin the nation, and the burning of rotten posts only fit for the fire) in order to set up a new frame, consisting of sound and well seasoned timber'. But now 'his joy is turned into sorrow'. Promises to consider the petition of 11 September 1648 had been broken, and 'the Agreement of the People is waived'. Extensive church and royal property was available, 'yet there is no burthen removed, neither excise nor tithes'. Present arrangements conflicted with the principle that 'power was originally in the People'.⁸⁵

John Vernon was certainly a Baptist by late 1649, and he shared much with the Levellers. Vernon's pamphlet of December 1648 scathingly recalled the role of England's 'late civil stewards', 'most of them drunk with iniquity, pride, gluttony, passion, oppression, tyranny, protecting the rich and their great relations untaxed, without pity, grinding the faces of the poor'. But Vernon's chief purpose was to denounce the retreats from the principle of religious toleration then being incorporated into the renegotiated *Agreement of the People*. He opposed as bogus the distinction between a compulsive and a restrictive power in religion, for 'the most cruel of tyrants have first appeared in the restrictive'. Only Christ 'can sway the conscience, and subdue the proud imagination of the stoutest idolators'. There were no circumstances in which persecution for religion was permissible: it was 'the standing principle of all oppressing powers, to vilify, that they may pluck up or restrain whomsoever they cannot otherways more voluntarily subject... witness the ordinance of Parliament lately renewed, for the restraining and punishing of men as blasphemers and sectaries.' 'I hope there's none that aspire to any power, but what the People shall invest them with, and may repeal'.⁸⁶ Vernon demanded complete religious toleration. 'I would indeed have all Jews or Heathens ... to traffic and suffer to inhabit, as freely to converse as commerce with you, without restraint upon religious causes'. He was associated with the Particular Baptists, but argued just like Thomas Helwys, noting the flourishing state of the Low

⁸⁵ E.Harrison, *Plain Dealing* (1649), E554(22) Td 9 May, 3, 4, 6, 9-12. 13-15.

⁸⁶ Vernon, *The Sword's Abuse Asserted* (1648) E477/3, 10-11, 4, 5, 8; as Cawdray rightly replied, this 'places all power of Government in the people', *The Depths of Satan Discovered*, 16.

Countries ever since they suffered every man to worship according to his conscience, and even the Jews themselves to worship in their public synagogues'; this actually helped prevent other states using religion to undermine the citizens' loyalty, for 'whilst every man enjoys his liberty, it is his proper interest to endeavour the preservation of the commonwealth'; if 'some few' attempted subversion, they would be isolated: it was impossible to subvert a non-confessional state 'by a general consent of the people, when there will be such a variety of judgements, and every man is free, and in fear of a change, lest he be a loser by it.'⁸⁷

Another radical Calvinistic Baptist was Thomas Collier. His views cited earlier do not signal political abstention around concepts of an army united in saintliness or an ideal world of the mind to come. The elision, by him and others, of denominational differences between the saints, was partly suggested by politics. Although Collier was certainly a Baptist in 1647, he omitted to mention this in his work against the Church of England that year concentrating entirely on the evil of tithes and the compulsory maintenance of ministers: 'monopolists' were 'much more dangerous and dishonourable in spiritual things than in temporal'.⁸⁸ Collier knew political action was needed to abolish tithes; he agreed with many elements of the Leveller programme. In his sermon at Putney, amongst 'many national grievances', there appeared first 'Spiritual oppressions in matters of conscience', followed by 'tyrannical and oppressing laws and courts of justice'. He complained of 'oppression or grievance in writing our laws in an unknown tongue', 'arbitrariness in the wills of men', of tithes and of free quarter, demanding that 'whatsoever beareth the face of oppression, let it be removed'.

In almost all cases our knowledge of what Particular Baptists thought about politics depends on the pronouncements of their leaders. They were usually more conservative than the Generals and probably this stemmed from the less optimistic view of man's nature typical of high Calvinists, as well as the social and political circles in which they moved. But the one known statement of the political ideas of rank and file members does not fit with this pattern. In March 1649, Thomas Thache signed a work complaining about a Baptist congregation at Cirencester, endorsed by five other ministers in the area. Harrison, 'their teacher', he alleged, had been a London stationer, a trooper in Essex's army, and even a dairy-man and a schoolmaster! At some point, the vigilance committee of Gloucester had 'approved and placed this man a pastor to a congregation at Charleton near Cheltenham 'where he now exerciseth his gifts.' He had been called to act as lecturer at Cirencester, and there built up a group of followers, 'he being at that

⁸⁷ Vernon, *Sword's Abuse*, 10, 14; Cawdray labelled this 'atheistic, prophane policy', *DSD* 21.

⁸⁸ Collier, *A Brief Discovery of the corruption of the English Church* (1647) E1183/4, Td 20 July, 31

time and to this day their teacher in private'.⁸⁹ This teacher is to be identified as the young Richard Harrison, later co-pastor with Kiffin at Devonshire Square.⁹⁰ Thache printed a 1648 statement of this group, objecting to the 'praying and prating' of local ministers that 'the Lord would bring the King out of the hands of those that did restrain him. What was this but a stroking the Malignants on the breast'? They thought it 'honourable service to bring delinquents to punishment, such vipers that would eat out the heart of our liberties, which is as dear as our lives (which the Army only doth).' Ministers could not pretend that the sects both sought to imprison them for their beliefs and were also 'endeavouring a prodigious toleration of all religions'. The outlook of the Cirencester Baptists on religious toleration was less ambiguous than that of the London leaders: they were against 'any evil practice or opinion' and 'cannot but detest all humane inventions in the worship of God'. But 'we shall not use (as some do) indirect means as stirring up the Magistrate against them, there being no footsteps in the Gospel' for it: 'the saints overcome the devil and his instruments by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.' This could even be thought of as a comment on the London leaders policy of 1647.⁹¹

The second civil war, in summer 1648, reunited the Army, and it seemed for a time that in military circles, at least, all concurred in the need to bring to justice 'that man of blood'. The famous Leveller-Independent petition of 11 September opposing any personal treaty with the King, also set out a further draft constitution; it was followed by many more which aimed chiefly to prevent the more immediate prospect of personal treaty.⁹² It seems that the Particular Baptist leaders neither supported nor opposed the 11 September petition. Lilburne later suggested that that a group of unnamed pastors 'now my chiefest adversaries, durst not join in it nor own it for very fear'. This has been plausibly supposed to refer to Price, Rosier and Kiffin, rather than the Independent pastors as a whole, which would suggest that others found themselves to the left of the trio on the issue.⁹³ However, despite their record, and that of Price, in pressing for a personal

⁸⁹ T[homas]T[hache], *The Gainsayer Convinced*, Td 6 Aug 1649, 'To the reader' unpag, 53.

⁹⁰ Thache says 'Harrison' was lecturer at Charleton near Cheltenham; a Richard Harrison was curate at Charleton Kings (adm Feb 1649): *Calamy Revised*, citing a correspondent of Walker (Bodl C.7.37) Thache may have been right about Harrison's apprenticeship; two men of his names [sub 1568 and 2153] appear in D. MacKenzie, ed., *Stationers' Apprentices 1605-40*, freed in 1637 and 1642 respectively.

⁹¹ Thache, GC, 2, 1, 4, 5; this eight-page statement, contained in the copy in the Congregational library, London, is missing from the B.L. copy. Signatories were Thomas Clotterbuck, Giles Handcox, William Burg, Caleb Self, Henry Archer, John Oates, William Peisley, Thomas Sheppard, Samuel Stevenson, a bodice maker and Roger Sparks, a shoemaker. Giles Handcox, a mercer, has since 'taken his oath for Justice of the Peace, and now executes that office in Cirencester' (ibid 8, 29, 37, 61). One of the names listed on the first page (under 1651) of the Cirencester churchbook is Caleb Self and another is John Cates or Oates (Cirencester Churchbook, Gloucester Record Office, MF 1268).

⁹² 11 September petition, Wolfe, *LM*, 283-90 and *LT*, 147-55; see Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, 109; Brailsford, *The Levellers*, 350-54; some clauses reflect compromises from earlier positions.

⁹³ *Tolmie*, 177, citing Lilburne *Legal Fundamental Liberties*, *LT*, 415.

treaty in summer 1647, no one suggested that the London Particular Baptist leaders supported the similar initiative of autumn 1648.⁹⁴ Grandees including Cromwell hoped such a treaty might at the last be extracted. But the agenda for his secret manoeuvres could not be canvassed openly; opinion amongst the middle ranking officers, a decisive element in determining the outcome, remained implacably hostile to Charles. It was politically impossible for commanders such as Hobson, even if they favoured a personal treaty, to urge it openly. On 22 September, Hobson and his officers at Newcastle and Tynemouth wrote to Fairfax protesting against efforts in its favour, and though they did not explicitly endorse the 11 September petition, this was implied.⁹⁵ Hence the abstention of Kiffin and his friends.

The role of other Baptists in these events is hard to distinguish. It seems probable, given his record, that Samuel Oates had a hand in the Rutland petition against the personal treaty. The petitioners mourned the death of the famous Leveller, 'our beloved Rainsborough', fearing fatal consequences should agreement be reached: 'our greatest enemies shall be made our judges and chiefest governor (or King)': 'how durst our parliament think of treating with such a man'. They conclude: 'we will venture life and limb with you for the suppressing of tyrants, taking away oppressive laws and all grievous burthens under which the commonwealth groaneth'. The appeal was 'presented by Lt Freeman, accompanied by three gentlemen of the same county'.⁹⁶

4 Baptists and the Politics of the Revolution, 1648/9

At the Whitehall debates, which he attended in December 1648, Thomas Collier opposed Ireton's view that the magistrate should be empowered 'to punish things which were sin, sin against god'; he thought the judicial law by which this had once been done 'have not reference to us under the gospel', and disagreed 'that the magistrate hath his power from divine institution ... and not the Agreement of the People.... if he have his commission from God we have nothing to do to limit him'; it is also clear that he argued here for 'liberty or toleration' even for idolators.⁹⁷ About this time, he suggested of the Civil War that 'the ground of difference was the subject's liberty, and privilege.' Collier opposed a personal treaty with the King: 'the chief cause of these wars, and

⁹⁴ Prince (*The Silken Independents*, E560/24, 4) named Kiffin Patience and Price as active in it in 1647.

⁹⁵ *A Copie of two letters sent from divers officers of the Army in the North to... Fairfax, concerning the large petition... eleventh of Sept. 1648* (BL 190g.13(368)). The first, from the garrison of Newcastle and Tynemouth (20 Sept) signed first by Lt Col Hobson, the commanding officer, opposed 'a treaty with them for peace that God speaks no peace to' and favoured 'just petitions which are laid aside'. 'We can hardly forbear to petition the parliament' in these terms but 'are very unwilling to do anything' without Fairfax's permission. It does not specifically endorse the 11 September petition, whereas the correspondence from Berwick does (30 Sept). For the militancy of northern garrisons in November see eg *A Declaration of the Army* E472/6, and *Two Petitions*, E473/23; Gentles NMA, 272-6.

⁹⁶ *To his Excellency the Lord Fairfax... Rutland*, (24 Nov, B.L.669.f.13(47))

⁹⁷ A. Woodhouse, *PL*, 164, 168; Collier, *A Discovery of a New Creation*, E1187/6, 35-38, CP2, 125

from whom nothing but war, blood, and ruin can be expected; that prefers his own prerogative, and the satisfying of his own unlimited will and lusts, before the peace and welfare of the kingdom.' In the arguments between Levellers and grandees, he was more sympathetic to the former. But, it seems, he was daunted by the risks of inaugurating a more representative legislature, and was perhaps influenced by the arguments of millenarians such as Harrison that the future lay not in the *Agreement of the People* but in Godly rule through the saints. So Collier placed his confidence in the religious and enlightened views of the army grandees and their friends: 'the supreme law of the civil or temporal magistrate is the safety and good of the people; and those who are saved spiritually know best what is good for the nations temporal well being, for they seek not their own but others good'.⁹⁸ John Vernon's name does not appear on the official attendance list for the Whitehall debates, but he was clearly there, having had 'the privilege to be present at your consultation about the pretended agreement'. His violent disapproval of the discussion of magistrate's power in religion on 14 December, and his advice to the army that they should 'confer not with powers and policy in this matter' suggests that he, like Lilburne, quickly abandoned the talks. *The Sword's Abuse* was issued by the Leveller printer John Harris, publisher of *Mercurius Militaris, or the Army's Scout*.⁹⁹

Of the certain and probable military Baptists listed earlier, only five – Axtell, Brayfield, Deane and Spencer of the Particulars, and Chillenden of the Generals, were listed as having attended the debates. They often opposed Ireton's attempts to revise the Leveller draft of the *Agreement of the People*. On 16 December, Axtell and Deane opposed his effort to retain for the Representative the right to conscript (Axtell opposed Hewson, his own Colonel, on this); on 18th, with Chillenden, they voted against the Representative's right to interfere with the execution of the law. In a vote on a similar principle on 26th (its right to punish persons who had broken no existing law) the three, this time with Deane, again opposed Ireton. But the reserve on religion aroused the most heat. On 21 December a motion was put that the Representative should be empowered to exercise final judgement in moral as well as civil matters. As Barbara Taft remarks, this was 'a denial of the principle that religious belief and practice were inviolable individual rights'. Three of the five Baptists voted against Ireton on the issue, with only Deane in

⁹⁸ CP2, 125; Collier, *A Vindication of the Army Remonstrance*, E477(6), 16, 26-7, 6; Underdown claims (*Somerset*, 178) that Collier drafted the 21 Dec 1648 petition to Parliament (CJ6 102) published 5 Jan as *To the Honorable the Humble petition of divers Gentlemen ... Somerset* (B.L.669f13 (69)). The published version attacked the Levellers and asked that 'the pious ministry may have a settled sufficiency, and not deprived of their augmentation', which does not sound like Collier.

⁹⁹ Vernon, *The Sword's Abuse Asserted*, E477/3, 3; Gregg, *Free-born John*, 255; for Harris, Taft & Zaller in G-Z2, 59-60; for debate: CP2, 71-132, Woodhouse, *PL*, 125-69, Taft, 'Council of Officers' Agreement', *HJ* 28 (1985) 169-85

support (no vote recorded for Chillenden), and the motion fell by 27 to 17. However, a second vote then excised the original reserve, and it is likely that Ireton achieved this by 'holding forth the prospect of a separate, detailed article on religion'. This emerged as article 9 in the Officers Agreement, and prescribed a positive role for the state in establishing a Protestant public religion: toleration would 'not necessarily' extend to papists and Episcopalians. It seems highly likely that those who voted for the excision of the reserve must have done so in the knowledge of the broad lines of Ireton's thinking. All five Baptists (including Chillenden) voted with him in the second division on 21 Dec, which Ireton won 37 to 12. Ten other officers, however, also opposed Ireton in the first vote but sided with him in the second. So the Baptist officers played a role in the shift of the military behind a less tolerant religious policy, but it would have easily been adopted even if they had all opposed it. The Officers Agreement was ignored after it was presented on 20 January, and played no part in English constitutional history. But it was significant nonetheless. The revised Agreement played a crucial political role, in securing the officer cadre of the Army in favour of collectively agreed positions consistent with waging a war for religion in Ireland, and with undermining support for those, principally the Levellers, who might obstruct it.¹⁰⁰

After Pride's Purge, the initiative was with the grandees. They had broken the political stalemate, gaining freedom of action and the chief levers of civil power; the Levellers became more isolated. Lilburne attended Parliament on 28 Dec 1648 with fifteen supporters, but other chief leaders such as Walwyn, Wildman and Highland did not appear. Thomas Prince, the best known, was not a member of a gathered congregation.¹⁰¹ Of the others, at least four were certainly Baptists at some point. Of these, Samuel Blacklock has been discussed; Andrew Dednam, Edward Tench and Thomas Dafferne were probably General Baptists. A man named Tench was twice reported to be a Baptist preacher, in Lambe's congregation and as a companion of Oates.¹⁰² Dafferne was arrested in September 1649 'while distributing Lilburn's pamphlets to the garrison at Warwick'; he signed a letter to Cromwell from the General Baptist congregation of Chequer without Aldgate in May 1653.¹⁰³ An Andrew Debman was noticed by Edwards: 'an Anabaptist, and a Preacher among them, a Cooper by trade, a sorry fellow that cannot write nor read, and yet is a great Preacher among the Sectaries'. Dednam also signed a declaration disputing the testimony of the spy George Masterson against Lilburne and the Levellers.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ B. Taft, 'Voting lists', *BIHR* 52 (1979), 138-154; quoted at 144, 146; lists at 146-9.

¹ *CP* II, 265-6; *LT*, 371, 424

¹⁰² *Gang* I 93, III, 106; Alethes Noctrof [Zachary Crofton], *Perjury the Proof of Forgery* (1657), E931/1 referred to 'Tench (the blasphemous constable)' sig Av

^{1 3} B. Manning, *1649: Crisis of the English Revolution*, 210; Nickols *OL*, 121-2

¹⁰⁴ *Gang* III, 88; J. Norris, *A Lash for a Lyar* E428(8); N. Carlin, 'Leveller Organisation in London', *HJ* 27(4) (1984) 955-60

The present writer has failed to find any sense in which the religious views of the Lambe tendency (as opposed to those of ecclesiastically unattached Levellers) led them to develop political positions which conflicted with the Levellers' secular aims or approach. It has been suggested that in 1649, Richard Overton gave expression to his 'radical view of the separation between church and state which permitted the formation of a secular notion of citizenship'. In just the same way, the General Baptist tradition had 'freed itself from confusion' between 'citizenship and sainthood'.¹⁰⁵ Both these statements are unquestionably true. Nevertheless, it is suggested, 'Overton's own career was explicitly that of Leveller, not that of a General Baptist, in politics'. The meaning of this statement is not explained and no evidence is offered for it. How did the career of a General Baptist in politics differ in principle from that of Overton, if, as is here argued, both made the same fundamental distinctions in principle? The suggestion that Overton 'was not acting as an official spokesman for that sect' in his pamphlets against religious persecution seems to be designed to further this counterposition; but no-one acted as an 'official spokesman' for the General Baptists.

These claims are connected to the suggestion that as a movement with secular aims, the Levellers were opposed to 'the saints' in general, and therefore to the General Baptists in special. Other formulations seem to incorporate this as an assumption. Thus, 'the General Baptists were drawn into the Leveller movement through Richard Overton', as if the Leveller movement existed as a coherent and identifiable body of people before the General Baptists 'joined'. (It will be recalled that General Baptists distributed what is generally regarded as the first 'Leveller' petition in summer 1646). In July 1647, Chillenden and Allen 'had as yet no inkling that the sectarian and Leveller interests were distinct'; and there was the 'breakdown of the autonomous and secular Leveller organization in December' 1648.¹⁰⁶ Of course, the Leveller party was 'secular', in that it was organisationally 'autonomous' of the gathered religious congregations, and in that it existed to effect political change. But the far stronger claim here is that the Levellers represented a 'secular' interest contrary to that of 'saints' who attended any churches at all, not just to the 'saints' amongst the Particular Baptists and Independents who opposed them politically. All churches were united by an unspecified 'distinct interest'. Now the basic conception of politics which informed the Lambe church was the strict separation between spiritual and material aspects of life; there should be no established church and the state should tolerate all religious views:

¹⁰⁵ In theory the Particular Baptist leaders defended the right of individuals to an autonomous spiritual life, and did not 'confuse' this with the right of the gathered church to exist. In practice, they were prepared to sacrifice the rights of some individuals to establish the right of gathered churches to exist unmolested. But this stemmed from their politics, not their confusion.

¹⁰⁶ *Tolmie*, 151, 161, 182; Chillenden's support for Ireton in the second Whitehall vote on religion is the only evidence found of a General Baptist opposing the Levellers on what might have been such a basis.

there is no evidence of any disagreement (making allowance for tactical concessions) on the political status of religion between them and the Levellers.

There were of course some 'saints' who abandoned the Levellers in late 1648. Pride's purge had been effected by a leading member of a high Calvinist Separatist church, and some separatists continued to hold to such theological positions. Probably they were attracted politically to rule by the godly military minority. But there was a serious argument here, between close associates, on the terrain of politics in which the balance was continuing to swing against the Levellers, especially because of the Irish issue. Chidley himself claimed he had disagreed with the Levellers over including 'supreme authority' in the title of the March 1647 petition, suggesting he had had political reservations about their 'extremism' even then.¹⁰⁷ On the basis that church-membership determined support, 'saints' should have long abandoned the Levellers, with their support for a franchise massively expanded into the profane multitude: there is no reason to presume that the failure to appear of, say, Highland, stemmed from his membership of a gathered church. Walwyn and Wildman also disagreed with Lilburne over his egress from discussion of the *Agreement*, and also did not appear with him. All the Levellers considered themselves Christians, including Walwyn, who attached to his irritation at the certitude with which pastors tended to treat religion, his own broad and undogmatic attachment to the basic tenets of the faith. The Levellers' strictures against John Goodwin's church and the Particular Baptist leaders did not apply to the church of Thomas Lambe, who, as they reported, was outraged at the behaviour of their opponents and had offered to debate against them in public.

The events of December/April 1649 involved defeats for the Levellers and the most radical of the sects on the one hand, and of a range of conservative forces on the other. The Particular Baptists played a far more prominent role against the Levellers than against the king. Daniel Axtell, certainly a Baptist by this time, was commander of the guard at the King's trial and was executed as a regicide. William Allen (the merchant) wrote of the King's execution that 'for the anabaptists then in being, that were neither of the parliament nor army: as far as I can learn, the most eminent in London were so far off from having a hand in it, that they were dissatisfied in their proceeding that were active in it.'¹⁰⁸ This could easily be dismissed as special pleading, but their enthusiasm in autumn 1647 for a personal treaty (and for monarchical government), together with the general outlook of the Particular Baptist civilian leadership as set out in their declarations, suggest they may have been horrified by the trial and execution of Charles I.

¹⁰⁷ S.Chidley, *The Dissembling Scot*, E652/13, 8; Gentles, 'London Levellers' *JEcch* 29 [1978]. 281-309

¹⁰⁸ William Allen letter 30 May 1659 (Baxter Letters iv 187); Nuttall and Keeble, *Baxter* I #576 p393-4.

The victors in the struggle may themselves appear extremely radical. Cromwell and Ireton set about a revolutionary remoulding of the instruments of government, but they did so in the interests of social conservatism and military discipline. Key instruments in their victory were Independent and Baptist churches; in more than one sense, the triumph of the army was the triumph of the saints. Some Particular Baptists, especially in the military, did very well out of the war and revolution, acquiring high positions, estates and a leading role in serving the Protestant interest of the state. This was most obviously the case in Ireland, where large numbers of Particular Baptists were extremely prominent; Philip Carteret became Advocate General there.¹⁰⁹ William Packer became a Commissioner for Propagation of the Gospel in Wales and served on the Hale Commission. He was a trustee for purchase of the Theobalds estate for over £35,000 in August 1650 and became a deputy Major General in 1656 and MP for Woodstock in 1658.¹¹⁰

The new dispensation allowed the Baptists to preach without fear of official molestation for the first time. Hobson seems to have been employed by the Commission for the Gospel in the North.¹¹¹ On 17 January 1649 it was ordered 'that Mr Kiffin and Mr Knollys be permitted to preach in any part of Suffolk, at the petition of the Ipswich men', and on 22nd, twenty-seven citizens of Ipswich wrote to Cromwell thanking him and the house for 'the liberty granted to Mr Knowles and Mr Giffin according to our desire to come among us', though this move was 'much opposed by some' who 'do labour to hinder it'. Their labours were likely to be 'not only very comfortable to us in particular, but very *profitable* to the state in general'.¹¹² A little later, Thomas Tillam was appointed to the Mercers' Lecturership at Hexham, and soon established a Baptist church there.¹¹³ Benjamin Coxe seems to have been employed in some official capacity at Bedford. On 4 September 1648 the fourth London classis demanded the authorities there be informed of the 'many heterodox tenents held by Mr Benjamin Coxe'. On 19 October, the Provincial Assembly agreed, over the protest of Cornelius Burgess, that 'he shall have his approbation when he brings his certificate of [having] taken the covenant'. On 22 March 1649, at St Paul's Church Bedford, one Nehemiah Coxe was christened by his father Benjamin. This was surely the Baptist pastor, and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, as a means to confirm his orthodoxy, Coxe acquiesced in some form of christening ceremony in the parish church.¹¹⁴ From

¹⁰⁹ See J. Seymour, *The Puritans in Ireland*, passim, *ARPB* II, 110-24 and T. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland* passim, Gentles, *NMA* ch 11; for Carteret, eg Dunlop I, 282, 290, 292, 486, 491, 549;

¹¹¹ Richardson, *PM*, 82; Gentles *DMMP*, 319; Aylmer, *SS* 316; McGregor, *G-Z* III, p1-2

¹¹² R.Howell, *Newcastle*, 249 citing Lambeth MSS 1006 f333

¹¹³ Whitelocke, *Memorials*, II 497; Klaiber, *The Story of the Suffolk Baptists*, 24.

¹¹⁴ R.Howell, *Newcastle*, 249, Payne, 'Thomas Tillam' *BQ* 17 (1956), 61-6; *Fenstanton*, 304

¹¹⁴ *M-S Minutes*, 520, 526, 533; Surman, ed., *Minutes of the Fourth Classis*, Harleian Soc 82/83 (1952/3), 56, 58, 140; IGI citing parish records of St Paul Bedford.

about this time, at both Bedford and High Wycombe, Baptists, seem to have contributed to changes in the direction of a more popular (ie less oligarchical) local government.¹¹⁵

In the wake of the successful coup, and the issue of the officers' Agreement of the People on 20 January, it seemed that the state had granted the long desired toleration. Three days later, Samuel Richardson could not resist a victory roll: 'To what purpose think ye hath God slain so many of our enemies? One cause surely is that his people may dwell quietly and safely. God hath blasted them that have kept us from our sweetest liberty. The King and his bishops denied it to us and God hath blasted them, those of the Parliament promised liberty to us, but did not give it us, God hath blasted them; the synod with the ministry of England should have spoken for us, and they spoke against us, and God hath blasted them... and if the Army had neglected us herein, *God* would have blasted them.' It may be that he was inspired by relief at the turn of events to demand a fuller toleration: 'If you say liberty for the people of God but not for others, you could not provide for one and not the other. If the Children have any bread, the dogs will have some....'. Richardson argued eloquently against uniformity in religion, and urged the magistrates to keep out of it: 'Uniformity in religion do trouble the consciences of many and impoverish the saints, and cause them to lose their lives, for laws concerning religion catch the best men ... men in zeal for religion persecute Christ, and think they do good service when they kill them; if they must judge what is truth, we must always be persecuted.' He asked, 'Are they to make laws concerning religion, or to appoint any material prisons for blasphemers of Christ: we require you to prove it' from scripture. And yet, 'We desire not that idolatry to be allowed publicly.'¹¹⁶

Richardson explicitly defended Pride's Purge, and sought to legitimate the coup by what amounted to a resistance theory: 'If the people may not judge, but the magistrate, then the people are enslaved to their judgement and we must act our own ruin if they bid us, which is contrary to scripture'. Clearly, underpinning the argument is the view that, at Pride's Purge, the Army had acted on behalf of the nation against a Parliament that had betrayed it. In January, Richardson reflected the sense amongst many radicals that though the way of the Levellers might be visionary, the way of the Grandees was both realistic and hopeful. There was great optimism that political and social improvements, and complete religious freedom, would be implemented. Richardson's work reflected something of this optimism. He defended 'Buff coated chaplains' against the Presbyterian ministers, asking 'are they the worse because they have buff coats'? He

¹¹⁵ Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, 322-4; First Ledger Book of High Wycombe, (*Bucks Rec. Soc.*, 11, (1956), G.Eland, ed, *Papers from an Iron Chest* (1937); G.Parsloe, Minute Book of Bedford Corporation 1647-64 (*Beds Hist. Recd. Soc.*, 26 (1949)), idem 'The Corporation of Bedford 1647-64' *TRHS* 29 (1947), 151-65

¹¹⁶ *An Agreement of the People of England*, (B.L. 669.f.14(59), in Wolfe, *LM*, 337-50; S.Richardson, *An Answer to the London Ministers* (1649) E540/8 (signed 23 Jan), 30, 29, 5; idem, *The Necessity of Toleration* (1647); Jordan *RRTE*, III, 515-23

thought their failure to understand Greek and Hebrew ‘not so necessary as you would seem to make it’, whilst defending the usefulness of languages for study. He was relaxed about his Presbyterian opponents: ‘I hope they will take an order with you; but not for liberty to print, I wish you as much liberty as any, the more you print, the more your wickedness will appear’.¹¹⁷

But the mood did not last long. Incensed by the coup, the Levellers issued *The Second Part of Englands New-Chaines discovered*, a vituperative attack upon the grandees, which, in now traditional manner, they took for signature to the Baptist congregations. The Commons judged that the pamphlet contained ‘most false, scandalous and reproachful matter, and is highly seditious and destructive to the present government’, tending ‘to division and mutiny in the Army’. Judged ‘guilty of high treason’, the authors were arrested on 28 March, in Overton’s case by Daniel Axtel.¹¹⁸ Perhaps because of his irenic approach, Richardson was selected to visit the leaders (probably with the Grandees encouragement) in the Tower, to persuade them to give up the struggle; he charged that they appeared in the eyes of most as ‘grand disturbers’ who ‘merely laboured to pull down those in power, to set up ourselves’.¹¹⁹ Richardson’s friendly approach having failed, the London leaders thought it necessary to dissociate themselves completely from agitation designed to unseat the new and unstable regime. On 2 April, Particular Baptist preachers, Kiffin, Patience, Spilsbury, Edward Drapes, William Consett, and ‘Mr Wayd the schoolmaster’, arrived at the House of Commons with copies of a petition. Its chief purpose was to disavow the new pamphlet: ‘we had nor have heart nor hand in the framing contriving, abetting or promoting of the said paper, which though read in several of our public meetings, we do solemnly profess it was without our consent or approbation, being there openly opposed by us’; ‘our meetings are not at all to intermeddle with the ordering or altering civil government (which we humbly and submissively leave to the supreme power) but solely for the advancement of the Gospel’. They hoped to live peaceably and advance the nation’s good, ‘no way complying with the disturbers thereof; that so we may approve our selves a people never to be justly adjudged heady high minded or despisers of them that are in authority’. They went on to call for the suppression of ‘whoredoms, drunkenness, cheating, and all such like abominations (of civil cognizance) in whomsoever’. They were assured by the Speaker ‘of liberty and protection, so far

¹¹⁷ S Richardson, *An Answer*, 7, 16-17, 19, 14. 26-8.

¹¹⁸ *Perfect Weekly Account*, 28 March–2 April 1649, E549/3, 29 March, 431

¹¹⁹ Lilburne’s account, *LT*, 209-10

as God shall enable them, in all things consistent with Godliness, honesty, and civil peace: and the house doth give you leave to print your petition.¹²⁰

The Levellers accused the Particular Baptist leaders of conniving with government politicians interested in discrediting them. Kiffin 'was put on the doing of what he did by some Parliament men, who he perceived were willing and desirous to be rid of us four'; as a result, said Lilburne, the petition's call for their release had been deleted. Overton also charged that 'some members of the House (as Mr Kiffin confessed in respect of himself) negotiate with the principal leaders of several congregations or religious people about the town, to promote a petition' so that 'those conscientious people (surprised by their fraudulent suggestions and craft) might (not truly understanding the business) appear in the disownment and discountenance of us' so that having secured for the Levellers 'the odium of religious people... under the anathema of the churches... then they think they may with ease and applause cut us off'. Overton suggested plausibly that by denouncing the Leveller pamphlet and also, in the same breath, a variety of serious offenders, most notably 'disturbers of the nations good', the authors sought to associate the two and thus prepare the ground for harsh measures: they 'tacitly and curiously in a most religious veil pointing at and reflecting upon us as Interrupters of the settlement of the commonwealth; heady, high minded, unruly disobedient, presumptuous, self-willed, condemners of rulers, dignities'. This amounted to 'an absolute justification of those votes of High Treason, and of prosecution against us as traitors'; the petition was 'evidently and clearly in pursuance of our blood'. Walwyn also saw the 'praying to Parliament to be careful to suppress all prophaneness: as if we had been such a people' as incitement to state action against them. Overton claimed that the Particular Baptist leaders 'had scarce ten in some congregations to sign it... in some none, and in the main they had not the tithe of the people; and yet these people like a consistory of bishops, a synod of presbyters or a New England Classis, presume upon the assumption of the Seven Churches of God, as if to themselves they had purchased the monopoly or patent thereof.' Walwyn noted 'how few of their honest members approve thereof'.¹²¹

The charge of going over the heads of the members should be rejected. Kiffin and his friends had delayed presenting the petition till the Monday, the day after their weekly service, clearly in order to discuss it in their congregations. Had there been strong opposition there, it must be doubted whether they would have gone with the document to Parliament. Amongst the factors which may have weighed with members were the fast accompli of the grandees, the

²⁰ Haller, *LT* [PCS] 228, 213; Overton (*ibid* 229) added two names, Fountain and Tomlins, to those who had become 'blood-hounds to hunt us to the bar of the House of Commons with a petition'; *The Humble Petition and Representation of Several Churches ... Anabaptists* (1649) E549/14, 5-6 8

¹² *LT*, 213, 228-9, 374; Walwyn, *Works*, 375

problem of Ireland, in which Leveller policy was vulnerable, and the sense that the party was already much weakened. There may have been little enthusiasm for the document, but the lack of evidence of protest against it suggests a credible mandate must have been obtained. Walwyn acknowledged that the petition seriously hampered the efforts of their friends to campaign for the Levellers' release: 'the seven churches were got before them, and had so much respect that our Friends found none at all' noting bitterly that he and his friends were abused 'upon the Exchange, by the mouths of very Godly people' and that 'slander will have its course'.¹²²

It is not accidental that in a second attack, William Kiffin and several independent friends chose to fix on Walwyn. He had enraged them by issuing in February 1649 his *Vanitie of the Present Churches*, an attack on the intolerance of separate churches, their tendency to deal against rational arguments by claims to direct and uncheckable spiritual experience, their 'silks, their fine and delicate linen, their laces, beavers, plushes; their fancies, plate, rings and jewels', and their 'hypocritical carriage'.¹²³ The response was vitriolic. *Walwin's Wiles*, licensed on 23 April 1649 did not omit to target his social and political attitudes, notably his antipathy to social inequality; in this sense it continued the assault of the *Declaration of Congregationall Societies* of November 1647.¹²⁴ But the chief line of attack in April 1649 was different. The sub-title traduced 'the subtle and crafty Wiles, the atheistical blasphemous, soul murdering principles and practices of Mr William Walwin', and the long title, punning the four prisoners' pamphlet, calls them 'England's new chains and Ireland's back friends'. The chief political point of singling out Walwyn explains the timing of the attack: his views and practices amounted to atheism and therefore to disloyalty to the state's purposes in papist Ireland, by now being obstructed by the Levellers.

Thus his scepticism had led to his 'corrupting and dividing (by himself and others) the honest and true hearted party to religions'. He and his friends had argued that the Irish expedition was aimed at expanding the territories and powers of the rulers of England, 'that it is an unlawful war, a cruel and bloody work to go to destroy the Irish natives for their consciences (though they have killed many thousand Protestants for their consciences) and to drive them from their proper natural and native rights'. They sought 'the utter and irrevocable loss of Ireland, ruin of the Army, crushing the present authority, dividing the honest party, the Irish Rebels may come with

¹²² Walwyn, *Works*, 376, 378; N. Carlin, 'Levellers and the Conquest of Ireland' *HJ*30 (1987) 269-88

¹²³ *Vanitie of the Present Churches*, lic 23 Feb, E1367 1; *LT*, 252-75, quoted at 26

¹²⁴ Brooke suggested that a false rumour (later retracted) had been deliberately spread against Walwyn by a possible Baptist: 'one Mr Woollastone meeting Major Cobet, bid him beware of Mr Walwyn, for he was a dangerous man, a Jesuite, and antiscrupturist, and to make the last good, said, that a woman being tempted by him to lewdness, she replying that it was against Gods word. Mr Walwyn... made answer What telst thou me of that idle book', (*LT* 329-49 at 343). Brooke, and Walwyn himself (*LT*, 350-98), explain how isolated incidents and remarks were built into the picture of a cynical blasphemer

all their powers from abroad, and in this nation, like a mighty torrent before them, and put themselves into a capacity of putting into execution their bloody cruel, tyrannical and revengeful thoughts against the honest party in the land. We have ever observed that this Mr Walwyn in all vicissitudes, and turns of affairs hath still withstood the present government, yea though modelled on his former pretended desires, which argues a hidden design in all his pretences'. In case anyone failed to understand it, the meaning of this dark hint is soon spelt out. Asking 'shall your poor brethren in Ireland receive no favour from you?', they urge readers to 'pluck off the visors of those Jesutical whistlers that... spy on your liberty, envy your approaching happiness, and would now destroy you by your own selves'. Thus Walwyn's scepticism, rendered as atheism, has led to political and moral corruption, and here, in a crude appeal to traditional fears of the Irish, is linked to treason in the interest of the papists. His colleagues are guilty by association. The outstandingly nasty postscript charges that 'when men turn apostates from God, scoffers of religion... they at last make nothing to strike hands with the Devil and his party, atheists and papists, and prophane malignants' who aim to 'betray Ireland, settle the Prince upon the English throne, betray the honest interest of the nation.'¹²⁵ Walwyn was a mild-mannered individual, too modest, perhaps, to recall his own arguments, in *The Compassionate Samaritan*, on behalf of Baptists and others likely to be excluded from toleration by the 'Apologetical Narrators' five years earlier. But he was furious, and composed a rebuttal, *Walwyn's Just Defence*, in which controlled invective was studded with sardonic asides. Still, the scale and pitch of his response may also testify to the impact of the attack upon him, and on the Levellers over Ireland.

Another Particular Baptist, Hanserd Knollys, may have been involved in the reduction of the Levellers as a serious force. In late April, Whalley's horse regiment mutinied because of grievances which included the refusal to release the Levellers from the Tower; and in Captain Savage's troop, which started the mutiny by seizing its colours from him was a trooper named Jeremy Ives. The revolt was regarded very seriously by the grandees, not least because this was one of their 'crack regiments', quartered in London. Hanserd Knollys was listed as its chaplain in a statement published later, which denounced the principles of the Levellers. However there is nothing to suggest that he played a distinctive role, not least because the signatories included Chillenden, Ives, and every other member of the regiment. It may be suspected that this statement did not issue forth in a spontaneous outpouring of popular feeling. Bizarrely, Ives, who surely had

²⁵ *Walwin's Wiles* .. *Englands new chains and Irelands back friends* E554 24 23 April 1649, 1-2, 32; *LT*, 286-90, 317, Frank, *The Levellers*, 203-4 mentions the attacks on Walwyn's religion and the Levellers' Irish policy, but does not connect them; neither does Brailsford, *The Levellers*, 541-52; *LT*, 302-3.

much to do with the agitation, appears to have prospered after this experience, becoming the regiment's chaplain in place of Knollys.¹²⁶

Not all the Particular Baptists approved of what was done in their name in the capital. Edward Harrison was living at Kensworth, but probably had connections with a congregation in Petty France. He had defended Pride's purge, the execution of the King, and the abolition of the House of Lords, but also the Grandees's failure to deliver the great things expected by the honest, radical 'country-man'. The agents of his disappointment were 'not damme cavaliers, not rigid envious and surly presbyters, but religious and godly friends, that have prayed, declared, remonstrated and fought together for freedom with them; that with their swords have cut in sunder the chains of other tyrants, and yet are now become the greatest tyrants over their brethren themselves'. Surely these 'religious and godly friends' included his own co-religionists, the Particular Baptist London leaders who had just denounced the Levellers? In a postscript dated 1 May 1649 Harrison complained that matters had recently taken a sharp turn for the worse: 'omissions of good are seconded by commissions of evil, yea the shedding of innocent blood, slighting and rejecting of honest petitions, which I tremble to consider of.' He urged 'an Agreement to some righteous foundations and principles of Government ... a most complete and exquisite model whereof is set forth by the four worthy asserters of England's Liberties, now prisoners in the Tower.' The London leaders were able to enlist their congregations against the Levellers, but they did not head a monolithic party and Harrison clearly illustrates the fact.¹²⁷

In April 1649, as it has been suggested, the Particular Baptists, having proved their political loyalty, came 'to rest securely in the bosom of the commonwealth.' For them, especially, it must have seemed almost incomprehensible that despite God's approval made plain through these great events, they themselves were already succumbing in numbers to a strange malaise. Christopher Fowler of Reading recalled John Chandler, 'the first scholar-anabaptist that came into this county, ten years since' with whom he had debated at nearby Hamstead Norrice: 'Our discourse was concerning infant baptism...' In 1656, Fowler met him by chance in London and, finding him half out of his senses, recalled that he 'was first anti-ministerial, then anabaptistical, then verging to familism, then to Rantism, now under total despair'.¹²⁸ 'Very many of the anabaptists are now turned Seekers, denying the truth of any church upon the earth for many ages past, denying that there are any pastors now on the earth, that there may be any preaching of the word, any joining in prayer, and celebration of baptism or the Lord's supper, any church

¹²⁶ Gentles, *NMA*, 326-8. Laurence, *PAC* 143; *The Declaration and Unanimous Resolution of Colonel Whaley... 14th of this instant May, 1649* Td 19 May

¹²⁷ *Gang* III, 81; Harrison, *PD* 12, 16

¹²⁸ C..Fowler, *Daemonium Meridianum... Second Part*, (1656), 52-3; for Chandler in 1646, *LJ* 9, 195-6.

discipline at all, or any church act, Church state, or Church ordinance whatever; while God from heaven send new apostles to work miracles and set up churches...' In 1651 Baxter asked who would believe that zealous fearers of God could 'ever be brought to place their religion in revelling, roaring, drinking, whoring' blaspheming etc., lamenting that 'Yet so it is... About Southam and Compton side among those that were anabaptists before, divers, as I am most credibly informed, are brought to this fearful state.'¹²⁹ Such examples could be multiplied, for this was a widespread phenomenon. Baptists (and many others) were affected. The Particulars issued two important attempts to deal with this epidemic of disillusion, uncertainty and searching which shaded (as Hobson, Chillenden, Baxter and others suggested) into the Ranter libertinism.¹³⁰

Many did not abandon their religious views, and a few did not abandon their politics. Jeremy Ives will perhaps serve as an example of someone who did not abandon either. He became a teacher in the church to which Samuel Oates belonged, which met at the Stone chapel near St Paul's: 'Brother Ives is called up by the church to serve them in the things of Christ' and was still disputing on behalf of the Baptists in 1674.¹³¹ After Cromwell's death, Ives was one of the few who refused to identify the Good Old Cause with the Rump Parliament. His arguments against this are revealing: 'Notwithstanding the great hopes we had of them, considering the good beginnings they made, and the fair opportunities they had, to perfect what they had begun; I demand whether the most considerable of the good things they did, viz, the taking away King and Peerage, and declaring this nation a free state, etc, were not rather the fruits of the force, which was put on them when the army garbled them, than the votes and results of a free parliament'; 'when there was no force at all upon them' their performance deteriorated abruptly. Ives looked to other role models, recalling 'a time when the army and divers others [marg: Col Rainsb, Lt Col John Lilburne, Capt Bray, Cornet Joyce, Cornet Thompson, Mr Richard Overton, Mr William Walwin, Thos Prince etc] were accounted the greatest asserters of their country's liberties, when they refused to comply with the votes of the then free and uninterrupted Parliament; whether there was not as much of the hearts and spirits of all people concurring to their interception in 1653 as ever there was to their election.' The army figures recalled amidst this roll-call of the chief Levellers, were, of course, Cornet George Joyce who seized the King at Holdenby, Captain Bray who led the mutiny at Ware, and Cornet William Thompson, who led the last party of mutineers and was pilloried by the government of the day as a gangster. Ives did not hesitate to include all these names as the 'greatest asserters of their countries liberties'. His career also casts

¹²⁹ Tolmie, 183. Baillie, *ATFI*, 97; Baxter, *PSP*, 148

¹³⁰ *Heart-Bleedings* (1650) E954/13; D.King, *A Way To Zion* (1650); idem, *A Discovery of Some troublesome thoughts* (early 1651 or 1652: *ARPB* 39) continues the theme.

¹³¹ Bodl. Rawlinson A8, f 127 Oates to Jeffes, 'London Nov 15th 1653'; Ives *A Sober Request* (1674).

doubt on the hypothesis that there was a cleavage between the politics of General Baptist Levellers and the politics of other Levellers.¹³²

5. Review

Richard Blunt, John Spilsbury and others went through separatism before reaching believers baptism. Separatism in the 1630s was probably as Calvinistic in its orientation as in 1608, and many never repudiated its central ideas. Yet it is also likely that, just like Smyth and Helwys, Edward Barber and Thomas Lambe also emerged from the separatist milieu. In the English hot-house from about 1640 their changing ideas on the church led towards a process of re-evaluation on many levels, as it had for Smyth and Helwys in the Dutch hot-house of 1608-10. There were choices. Spilsbury and others were relatively conservative in politics; Lamb would become a political activist, Barber was sometimes radical. Other General Baptists became much more quietist. Under the pressure of great events they all rethought their most fundamental ideas about God, man, the commonwealth and the relations between them.

Certainly Particular Baptist desire for respectability led them towards political caution. But they also appealed to social ideals, as article 34 of the 1644 confession shows: 'thither ought all men to come, of all estates, that acknowledge him to be their prophet priest and King, to be inrolled among his household servants, to be under his heavenly conduct and government, to lead their lives in his walled sheepfold and watered garden, to have communion here with the saints'. This appeals to the sense that all might share in the bounty of Christ what they lacked in the material world; perhaps it spoke to the yearning of hard-pressed artisans for a return to better, more paternalistic days. But in the 1640s, political and religious contention was unavoidable. At Bristol Broadmead church in 1646 'every meeting almost was filled with disputes and debates'.¹³³ Knollys's meetings in St Helen's Bishopsgate were large and turbulent and he was often in trouble. Levellers attended Particular Baptist meetings, evidently in the expectation of gaining support for their petitions there. Despite Vernon and Harrison, Particular Baptists were more active against the Levellers than the King. Yet there is a remarkable symmetry in the role of the hard-faced Daniel Axtel at the head of the Grandees' Praetorian guard, who stood watch over Charles Stuart, and who conducted with casual brutality the arrest of Richard Overton.

Most generally, in the entire series of their engagements with politics, (the two confessions, the Declaration of 1647, the personal treaty, the Humble Petition of 1649) the chief London leaders sought the favour of social and political forces that seemed most likely to

¹³² Ives *EQP* 3; cf White, *G-ZZ*, 135; Ives was a Leveller in politics 1647-58, and a General Baptist till his death; yet he obdurately refused to recognise any contradiction between them

¹³³ *Broadmead*, 98-9

guarantee freedom of worship for their church. But they were not 'a-political'. During the great political struggles of 1647-1649, Kiffin and his friends in the London leadership stood clearly and positively against the political radicals and on the side of socially conservative forces. They did not act as isolated individuals, but coordinated their actions, acting politically, as a party, so that the entire London membership should speak with one voice; the existence of important dissenters shows only that this party was not monolithic. The London leaders were politically passive only in relation to the grandees' seizure of power; they sacrificed the freedom of some individual consciences outside their ranks for the right of their own and other separate churches to exist.

Now it has been sufficiently argued here that the views of the Barber/Cornwell group of General Baptists owed something to the tradition of John Smyth and the Mennonites. Were it permissible to identify them with the General Baptists as a whole, it could be conceded that 'General Baptists had been profoundly shaped by the continental Anabaptist tradition and came closest of all the sectaries to being true anabaptists'¹³⁴ But it seems that this rests chiefly on their embrace of 'Arminianism' or general redemption. The broader characteristics of 'continental anabaptism' contrast sharply with the patriotic fervour of the merchant lay-preacher Barber and the ex-soldier Cornwell. These men had little in common with passive and pacifist European anabaptists who rejected state power as the work of antichrist. The anti-war statements of this group came not from pacifism in principle, or rejection of state power, but from the extreme difficulties in which the war reduced the middling and lesser sort in London.

In the present work I have treated the Barber/Cornwell tendency as separate from that of Lambe, because of the apparent lack of contact between them until the fifties and the evidence of Barber's arrangements for inter-communion, almost certainly with the Kentish baptists. But it was only later, after the defeat of the Levellers and the radical approach pioneered by Lambe, Oates and the rest, that the other tendency attained a clear identity. Led in London by Samuel Loveday and John Griffith and in Kent by George Hammond and William Jeffrey, this current defended strongly against Quaker competition, pressed hard to have its ceremony of laying on of hands accepted as compulsory in other areas, and encouraged abstention in politics. It is emblematic that its greatest gains were in the Fenland counties, for there the chief figure was Henry Denne, who had publicly recanted his radical views.¹³⁵ This trend sought to impose upon the laity disciplined observance of ordinances and greater respect for authority of both pastor and

¹³⁴ Tolmie *TS*, 69

¹³⁵ For Loveday, see my article in *DNB*; Jeffrey, *The Whole faith of Man* (1659) E1804/1, Griffith, *A Treatise Touching Falling From Grace* (1653) E690(17); idem, *God's Oracle and Christs Doctrine* (1655); G.Hammon, *A Discovery of the Latitude..*(1655), E1680(1); *Fenstanton* passim

magistrate, to check the aspirations of radical lay-persons to speak, act, and interpret the scriptures, for themselves, as well as to shape the polity of the nation.

There was resistance. Political activism clearly continued, or the General Assembly of 1654 would not have had to warn solemnly against it, but under the Protectorate, the sense that ordinary people had a role to play in building a good and godly society faded. In some respects this led Baptists to recapitulate the process which had led once insurrectionary continental currents (notably in Holland) into quietism after defeat had faced them with annihilation. Kentish and London leaders, like the Quakers, relearned ('independently' and in English conditions) some features of the continental tradition – but not others. In Cromwellian England, the army was in charge, but for most Baptists, it was no instrument of princely tyranny or a limb of antichrist, but a force to which the saints looked, even now. For the English, unlike the Dutch or Germans, war on their own territory was very unusual, and the emergence during this period of a standing army did not reconcile the traditional rulers of society to its necessity, indeed the reverse. A broadly anti-militarist and localist mentality was reinforced, during the interregnum, as a general feature of English life, from the county gentry downwards. In 1660, the military was confronted not by Anabaptist peasant insurrection, but by almost all of civil society, led by its traditional rulers. Standing armies, imposed by central state machines or other sources of military authority, were confined largely to the continent, and so also were anabaptists 'proper', who had arisen (as a tendency) in response. Though for a time the Quakers were the chief component in a campaign of resistance to state authority in religion, theirs was a very English approach, in seeking assiduously to exploit all legal and parliamentary channels.

The reception of anabaptist traditions in England was therefore marked by a process of adaptation, but there did emerge here many ideas once chiefly associated with groups such as the Mennonites. John Griffith began to argue for falling away, in a significant breach with Calvinism; the writings of William Jeffrey are permeated with a stronger consciousness of man's sinful nature; perfectibility of the saints forms the counterpoint. Generally, meekness in the church is complemented by passivity before the state; rewards in heaven follow. Perfectionism, rejection of Calvinism, a priestly rather than a lay flavour in worship, passivity in politics: these are all trends recognisable in both in 'continental' anabaptism, and in the style of religion which, because they fitted the times, made ground amongst the General Baptists in the fifties. Similar ideas and practices had evolved much earlier in Europe from a different direction: in the long struggle by Dutch, German, Swiss and other Anabaptists to survive in the face of persecution. But other European trends became naturalised in this period. Socinianism gained footholds in the London churches of both GB tendencies, which supported Biddle against the Cromwellian state. The

current survived the Restoration, notably amongst General Baptists of the Caffyn tendency, eventually emerging in a distinct Unitarian tradition. Mortalism and other 'rationalistic' trends, seem to have made their appearance in London, chiefly in and around the Lambe congregation, which certainly did not represent an English tradition hostile to continental innovation.¹³⁶

The General Baptists of the Lambe tendency; with their tradition of very large churches, admission of the public to open debates etc, stood furthest from the closed circles of the sectarian milieu. Their questioning spirit, dislike of priestly pretensions, and most of all their boundless activism, were central features of their religious outlook and practice. They, more than any, could hope for little from the Presbyterians, and this also helped to distance them from the higher circles of Independency, which, with their Erastian friends amongst the gentry and in the Houses of Parliament, hoped for a moderate episcopacy. Presbyterians and high Independents sometimes led mass petitioning campaigns, but used them as adjuncts to parliamentary and diplomatic manoeuvres, by which each sought to engineer the negotiated settlement of its choice. These General Baptists, ill-represented in exalted circles, and with little to hope from moderate solutions negotiated over their heads, were ideally suited to more drastic courses. Their strong impulse towards lay preaching, resentment of tithes and visceral anti-clericalism, led them towards an active and radical politics, which connected with the aspirations of artisanal 'middling sort of people' usually, and with reason, associated with the Levellers.

But political conditions influenced Baptists more pervasively than the Baptists influenced politics. Not just his religious beliefs but English and Dutch political events and ideas are essential to explaining how Thomas Helwys arrived at complete religious toleration. Army officers converted to the Baptists partly because of the Seven Churches' corporate reputation as serious and militant advocates of a godly, disciplined and socially conservative society, hard on radical libertines and dammee Cavaliers in equal measure. The probability that political and social factors influenced their choice should warn against attempts to make denominational alignments determine politics in any simple sense. Indeed political conditions, including Presbyterian ambitions, relations with independent divines and erastian politicians, were themselves vital in the complex process in which Baptists aligned and realigned themselves in this period, and gradually settled into the familiar denominational shape of later years.

¹³⁶ *To the Officers and Soldiers* Td 2 Feb 1656/7 E902/4, 3: Stone Chapel and perhaps Beech Lane on the one hand, Loveday's Tower Hill church and the Tooley St group on the other

Appendix A, Timothy Batte

A Timothy Batt of Somerset was admitted at Wadham College Oxford in 1631 and graduated BA there in 1635; he proceeded MA from Emmanuel, Cambridge in 1638 having been ordained in 1637. Calamy identified him as the lecturer at Ilminster in 1643, who in 1644 was an army chaplain during the campaign in the West. It is difficult, on the face of it, to believe that this was the same person who toured with Lamb in Essex about the end of 1643. From 1648 the minister wrote works which suggest he was not then a Baptist. Yet it is clear this was one person.¹ Shortly after his ordination, Batte of Emmanuel (for it must have been the ordained minister) was engaged as a chaplain to the garrison of Nijmegen, Netherlands. By 21 March 1641, the consistory had received a letter from Batte, informing them that he had become an anabaptist, and enclosing a pamphlet in support of his views.²

On, 26 Feb 1642, Timothy Batte was appointed by the Commons lecturer at Bishopwearmouth, Co. Durham, following a petition on his behalf by the Mayor of Sunderland, George Lilburne and the Aldermen. Batt had signed the Protestation returns three days earlier, and may have arrived shortly after September 1641, when the Scots had retreated from their occupation of the county under the Treaty of Ripon. In the absence of the English ministers expelled by the Scots, the inhabitants of Bishopwearmouth had been 'forced though privately to resort to one Mr Timothie Batt, an orthodox preacher and a man of godly and unblameable conversation: and by whom they receive much spiritual comfort'. But the minister John Johnson, had returned and 'hath ever since refused to permit the said Mr Batt to preach in the parish church' though often asked, though he himself 'preacheth but once upon the Lords day.' The petitioners asked that Batt be appointed their lecturer, 'to preach in the said church once every Lords day and once every Wednesday without any molestation or interruption of the said Mr Johnson or any other'; they would 'willingly and thankfully take care for his maintenance there'.³

It would be natural that a man who had acted as a military chaplain in the Netherlands against the legions of antichrist, should take up the same role in the New Model Army five years later. The problems over dating are not fatal. Calamy positively identifies the Somerset minister as the graduate, explaining that he was born in that county on 30 Nov 1613. Batte was nominated to a lectureship at Ilminster in March 1643, and he was in the area the following month, marrying

¹ Foster, Al Oxon, Venn; cf *Calamy Revised*, 37 and Laurence *PAC*, 96. Calamy, (*Account*, 603) identified the chaplain both as the graduate, and author of the works later thought to be by two men, but he ignored the baptist entirely.

² A Janssen & W. Meeeuwissen, eds., *Kerkeradsacten van de Nederduits Gereformeerde Gemeente te Nijmegen*, vol ii, 1592-1651, (Nijmegen 1996), 235, 241, 242; Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 349

³ CJ 2, 458; M. Bond, ed., *Manuscripts of the House of Lords*, vol 9 (1962), 309

an Elizabeth Long on 19 April 1643, at St Mary Magdalen Taunton.⁴ It may have been shortly afterwards that he repaired to London. On 11 January 1644, Batte was reported to have been with Lambe at a disputation with John Stalham at Terling, Essex, and probably remained in the congregation until the summer.⁵ Many radicals rejected both episcopal ordination and university divinity so it is not surprising that Batte introduced himself as a physician at Terling. But there Lambe certainly allowed him to take the leading part.⁶ As far as is certainly known, his army service began at the end of the following year. By an order of Fairfax, dated 2 July 1646, he was paid for 77 days as chaplain in Sir Robert Pye's regiment despite having been 'omitted in the several musters' (ie absent?) on 20 December 1645, 2 February, 9 and 30 March and 27 April 1646. Calamy reports of Batte that he 'exercised his ministry at [South] Mimms in Middlesex, while the war continued...'.⁷ Edwards dated the Spital debate on mortalism, attended by Baptist Batte as moderator for Richard Overton, to 5 February 1646 (just after chaplain Batte's second missing muster).⁸ Chaplain Batte returned to Somerset in late 1646 or early 1647, not long after the Baptist disappears from the London/Middlesex scene.⁹

Should there be any lingering doubt that the Baptist Batte of Nijmegen was the Somerset lecturer and later minister, there is a further link between them. In October 1640, Batt was succeeded in his chaplaincy at Nijmegen by William Cooper of Ringmer, shortly to be chaplain to Elizabeth of Bohemia at The Hague. By 1662, Cooper was living in Somerset, where he was later associated with James Stephenson, vicar of Martock. In his will (PCC 16 June 1685 cited in *Calamy Revised*), Stephenson left money to Timothy Batt! Despite the smallness of the world, it must be clear that the Nijmegen Baptist Batt succeeded by Cooper was both the graduate of Somerset left money by Cooper's Somerset friend and also the Baptist Batte associated with Thomas Lambe at Bell Alley Coleman St.

⁴ *CJ* 3, 18, 25 March 1643; *Calamy Revised*, 37; in April 1646, Thomas Collier was in touch with a group of 'brethren', evidently baptists at Taunton (*Gang* 3, 51-3; *Crosby* 3, 52-4).

⁵ Calamy thought Batte had been chaplain under Pye at the time of the western expedition in summer 1644 (*Calamy Revised* follows him here); this may be the source of Lawrence's statement, op cit 96, that he accompanied Pye's New Model Regiment to Cornwall in 1644 (impossible, given that it was not then formed; the regiment was part of Essex's Army). Batte might have gone to Cornwall then his role in Lamb's church seems to have ended about mid 1644 (Lamb, *Christ Crucified*, sig A4)

⁶ *Summe ... Terling* (1644) E12(2)

⁷ SP28/39, f14; Calamy, *Account*, 603;

⁸ *Gang* 2, 17-18.

⁹ In *The Waters of Marah Sweetened*, (E433/19) published version of sermon preached at Taunton on 11 May 1647, he appears as MA (*Walker Revised*, 121); in early 1648 Batt signed from Ilminster as a classis member, *The County of Somerset divided into several classes..* E354/16, Td 4 March [1648]

Appendix B: The Problem of Robert Barrow

Robert Barrow, the colonel in Ireland¹⁰ has been identified as 1) a lieutenant of Birch's regiment who played an important role in the capture of Hereford, 2) author of a 1646 work *A Brief Answer to R.H.* directed against the Seekers, 3) a former member of Samuel Eaton's congregation. It is implied that this was the church of the separatist Samuel Eaton (d1639), since 4) Barrow was also a 'Londoner' and author of the 1642 pamphlet reply to Barbon.¹¹ It will be convenient to consider these claims in the order here set out.

1) The lieutenant with Birch. This was actually Anthony Berrow, of Herefordshire. At 'Canon Froom, then a garrison for the Parliament', were 'many stout forest men', and of these, one Berrow, on account of his bucolic appearance, was selected to present himself at the town early in the morning in the guise of a local constable, and so gain entry for himself and concealed companions.¹² The tactic worked and Hereford taken. On 22 Dec 1645 'Lieutenant Barrow', the 'constable of Hereford' received the thanks of the House and was named as **Anthony Berrow**; he was granted the sum of £100 and £50 p.a. out of the estate of Sir Henry Lingen, of Sutton co Hereford, taken prisoner by Col Birch. On 10 August 1646, £250 of Lingen's fine was to be abated 'on settling the rent charge of £50 a year on Col John Birch, the assignee of Anthony Berrow'.¹³ Maybe Robert Barrow was the one christened at Banbury Oxon, 13 July 1606, father William,¹⁴ though many of that surname were from Lancashire. A Lancashire background would fit both with membership with Cheshire Eaton (see below), and with his service with Robert Venables, governor of Liverpool.

2) His authorship of R.B., *A Briefe Answer to R.H.* The author belonged to a group with objections to infant baptism, but independents often objected to baptising children of parents believed to be ignorant or superstitious.¹⁵ The author's standpoint is hard to fix. Anyway, the work was not, as suggested, directed at the Seekers, but against a Presbyterian, R H., plausibly identified by Wing as Richard Hollingworth of Manchester, a chief founder of the Presbyterian system in Lancs, and his book, *The True Guide or a Short Treatise*. In 1645-7, Hollingworth was

¹⁰ Seymour, *Puritans in Ireland*, 70-1, 95, 100; Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland*, 108, F-D, 66, CP III, 252; L.S.Popovsky, G-Z I, 45

¹¹ Tolmie, 54-5, 189, 155-6 citing Vicars, *Burning Bush Consumed*, 336 and Whitelocke *Memorials* (1853) I 555, which both allude only to the military career of [Andrew] Berrow.

¹² J Webb, ed., *Military Memoir of Col John Birch*, (1873), 26, 28-30; *A New Trick to Take Towns* [1645 E307/12; *Several Letters from Colonell Morgan* .. E313/17

¹³ CJ4 311, 331, 398; CCC, 1525

¹⁴ Dunlop, *Ireland Under the Commonwealth*, 60 and n, 68; P.Adair: *A True Narrative*, 207-8, Barnard, CI, 136-7, 14; Thurloe SP, III 29; International Genealogical Index citing parish register.

¹⁵ See eg. G. Firmin, *A Serious Question stated*, (1651) E683/23

contending against Samuel Eaton, a former minister of West Kirby, who returned to Cheshire from New England about early 1641 and was installed by John Duckinfield at Duckinfield chapel near Manchester. Eaton and his assistant Timothy Taylor headed a gathered congregation there.¹⁶

3) Now the authority for the statement that Col Robert Barrow, governor of Carrickfergus in Northern Ireland, was ‘formerly a member of the church of Samuel Eaton’ has not been discovered and neither has the source for his authorship of *A Briefe Answer*, asserted in Whitley’s *Baptist Bibliography*. Both might perhaps be correct. However, the only plausible basis for such a combination is that this was the Cheshire Samuel Eaton – not the separatist/Baptist Londoner who died in 1639. This hypothesis is much strengthened by the fact that when Cheshire Eaton’s assistant, Timothy Taylor, went to Ireland about 1652, he quickly acquired a preaching position at – Carrickfergus. Furthermore, it was Taylor who reported in 1655 that ‘since I opposed Mr Dicks [William Dixe] his doctrine in public, Col Barrow absents himself from the public meeting’. This may suggest that when Taylor arrived at Carrickfergus, he had been a co-religionist with Barrow, an independent who became a Baptist later.¹⁷ Barrow is not named in the letter and documents sent by Waterford, Kilkenny and Dublin churches on 1 June 1653. Now Barrow arrived in Ireland in 1649/50; had he then been a Particular Baptist, the authors would certainly have registered the fact. He appears for the first time as an ‘Anabaptist’ some months later when trying to impede the return of Presbyterian ministers to Ulster, as Adair reports.¹⁸ {It is possible that a correct (but so far unidentified) contemporary reference to Colonel Barrow as a former [congregationalist] member with Cheshire Eaton has led to two inconsistent inferences by different authorities: first that he was the R.B. who contended (as did Cheshire Eaton) with Hollingworth, but second, that the pastor concerned had actually been the Londoner Eaton, underpinning the identification of Barrow as author of the reply to Barbon. These inferences were then combined, to reach the conclusion that Colonel Barrow was the author of both works, each on the basis of his former membership with a different Samuel Eaton. }

4) But nothing appears to link the Robert Barrow who became a Particular Baptist colonel in Ireland either with London in general or Samuel Eaton of London in particular; he does not occur in Stinton’s documents. If he was with Samuel Eaton of Cheshire, there were no known Baptists in the northwest in 1642. There is therefore much reason to doubt that, despite the name on its cover, the future colonel had anything to do with the Baptist pamphlet of 1642, attributed by the Londoner Barbon to a Baptist pastor whom he knew well, probably Richard Blunt.

¹⁶ Later edition E375(2) Td 10 Feb 1646/7; J. Morrill, *Cheshire, 1630-1660* (1974), 35, 53, 164–6, 264.

¹⁷ Taft, ‘Voting Lists’, 151 identifies the Barrow of the Whitehall debates with Venables’ It col and therefore (F-D 667) with the Irish Colonel

¹⁸ *ARPB2*, 110–24, quoted at 120; Seymour, *op cit*, 95

ABBREVIATIONS

The usual form of abbreviation for published works is the author's surname followed by an italicised acronym of the title. Several published works are cited very frequently and some of these are represented by a title, or an acronym of a title, with no author.

For these and other non-standard citations, see below

Works of John Smyth are cited from Whitley, W. T., ed., *The Works of John Smyth*, (2 vols 1915), represented as *Smyth1*, *Smyth2*.

This two volume collection contains, at the pages here indicated, all the known works by Smyth; most of their titles are also abbreviated both in the text and in the references:

<i>The Bright Morning Starre:</i>	<i>Smyth1</i> , 1-66
<i>A Patterne of True Prayer:</i>	<i>Smyth1</i> PTP, 67-247
<i>Principles and Inferences of the Visible Church:</i>	<i>Smyth1</i> PI, 249-68
<i>The Differences of the Churches:</i>	<i>Smyth1</i> Differences, 269-320
‘Certain Demandaues’ (appended to <i>Differences</i>):	<i>Smyth2</i> , 321-6
<i>Paralleles, Censures and Observations,</i>	<i>Smyth2</i> PCO, 327-562

[This work appears as *Paralleles* in the text and as *PCO* in the references, where passages written in 1607 are often distinguished from those of 1609 by inserting one of these dates after *PCO*]

<i>The Character of the Beast:</i>	<i>Smyth2</i> CB, 563-680
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The remaining short works in volume 2 are not abbreviated: see p33 n117 above.

Al Oxon	J.Foster, <i>Alumni Oxonienses: members of the University of Oxford 1500-1714</i> (1891)
ARPB	White, B R., (ed), <i>The Association Records of Particular Baptists</i> (1973)
Baillie2, Baillie3	Laing, D., ed., <i>Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie</i> [3 vols, 1841], vols 2 and 3
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
B.L	British Library, London
BQ	<i>Baptist Quarterly</i>
BHH	<i>Baptist History and Heritage</i>
BIHR	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
Broadmead	Hayden, R., ed., <i>Records of a Church of Christ in Bristol, 1640-1687</i> [Bristol Record Society. 1974
Burrage1, Burrage2	C. Burrage, <i>Early English Dissenters in the light of recent research</i> , (2 vols 1912)
CCAM	<i>Calendar of the Committee for the Advance of Money</i>
CP1, CP2	Firth, C.H. ed, <i>The Clark Papers</i> , (vols 1 & 2; 1992)
CCC	<i>Calendar of the Committee for Compounding</i>
CJ	<i>Journals of the House of Commons</i>
Coggins, JSC	Coggins, J., <i>John Smyth and his Congregation</i> [1996
Crosby1, [etc]	Crosby, T., <i>History of the English Baptists</i> , (4 vols 1738-40)
CSPD	<i>Calendar of the State Papers, Domestic</i>
Dale, Members	T. C. Dale (transc) ‘The Members of the City Companies in 1641 as set forth in the Return for the Poll tax’ [Society of Genealogists, 1935]
EEB1, EEB2	B. Evans, <i>The Early English Baptists</i> , [2 vols, 1862]
E.R.O	Essex Record Office
F-D	Firth, C.H. and Davies, G, <i>The Regimental History of Cromwell's Army</i> , (1940)
Fenstanton	Underhill, E B. (ed) <i>Records of the Churches of Christ gathered at Fenstanton, Warboys and Hexham, 1644-1720</i> [Hanserd Knollys Society, 1854

Gentles DMMP	Gentles, I 'The Debenture Market and Military purchase of Crown Land, 1649-60', London PhD (1969)
Gentles NMA	Gentles I., <i>New Model Army</i> , (1992)
G-Z	Greaves, R L and Zaller, R., <i>Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals</i> (1983)
HLQ	<i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i>
H.L.R.O.	House of Lords Record Office
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
JBS	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
Jecch	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
K-N1, K-N2	N.Keeble & G.Nuttall, <i>Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter</i> [1991 2 vols]
L.A.O	Lincoln Archive Office
Laurence, PAC	Laurence, A., <i>Parliamentary Army Chaplains</i> , [1990]
Lightfoot	Lightfoot, John: Pitman, J.R., ed, <i>Whole Works of John Lightfoot</i> , (1825) vol xiii
LJ	<i>Journals of the House of Lords</i>
LT	Haller, W., and Davies, <i>The Leveller Tracts</i> [1944]
M-S Minutes	Mitchell, A., & Struthers, J., eds, <i>Minutes of the... Westminster Assembly</i> , (1874)
MINUTES	E. Maunde Thompson: transcript of minutes of Westminster Assembly, [Edinburgh Univ]
MQ	<i>Mennonite Quarterly</i>
NottArch	Nottinghamshire Archives
P&P	<i>Past and Present</i>
P.R.O	Public Record Office, Kew
Smyth1, Smyth2	Smyth, John: Whitley, W. T., ed., <i>The Works of John Smyth</i> , (2 vols 1915)
SOC	C.W.Foster, <i>The State of the Church</i> [Lincoln RS 1926]
TBHS	<i>Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society</i>
Td	Date inscribed by George Thomason in tracts received
Thurloe SP	Thurloe, John: <i>A Collection of State Papers of John Thurloe</i> , (7 vol 1742)
Tibbutt,	Tibbutt, H.G., ed., 'Tower of London Letterbook of Sir Lewis Dyve', Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 35 (1958), 49-96
Tibbutt, Luke	Tibbutt, H.G., ed., <i>The Letter book of Sir Samuel Luke</i> [Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 42 (1963)]
Tolmie	M. Tolmie, <i>Triumph of the Saints</i> , (1977)
VCH	Victoria County History
Venn	J., and J.A. Venn, <i>Alumni Cantabrigenses. A biographical list .. Part 1</i> (4 vols, 1922-7)
Wood, Ath Oxon	Wood, Anthony, <i>Athenae Oxonienses to which are added the fasti or annals of the said university</i> (1967 reprint of edition of 1813-20)

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MSS Additional, Harleian, Lansdowne, Sloane

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